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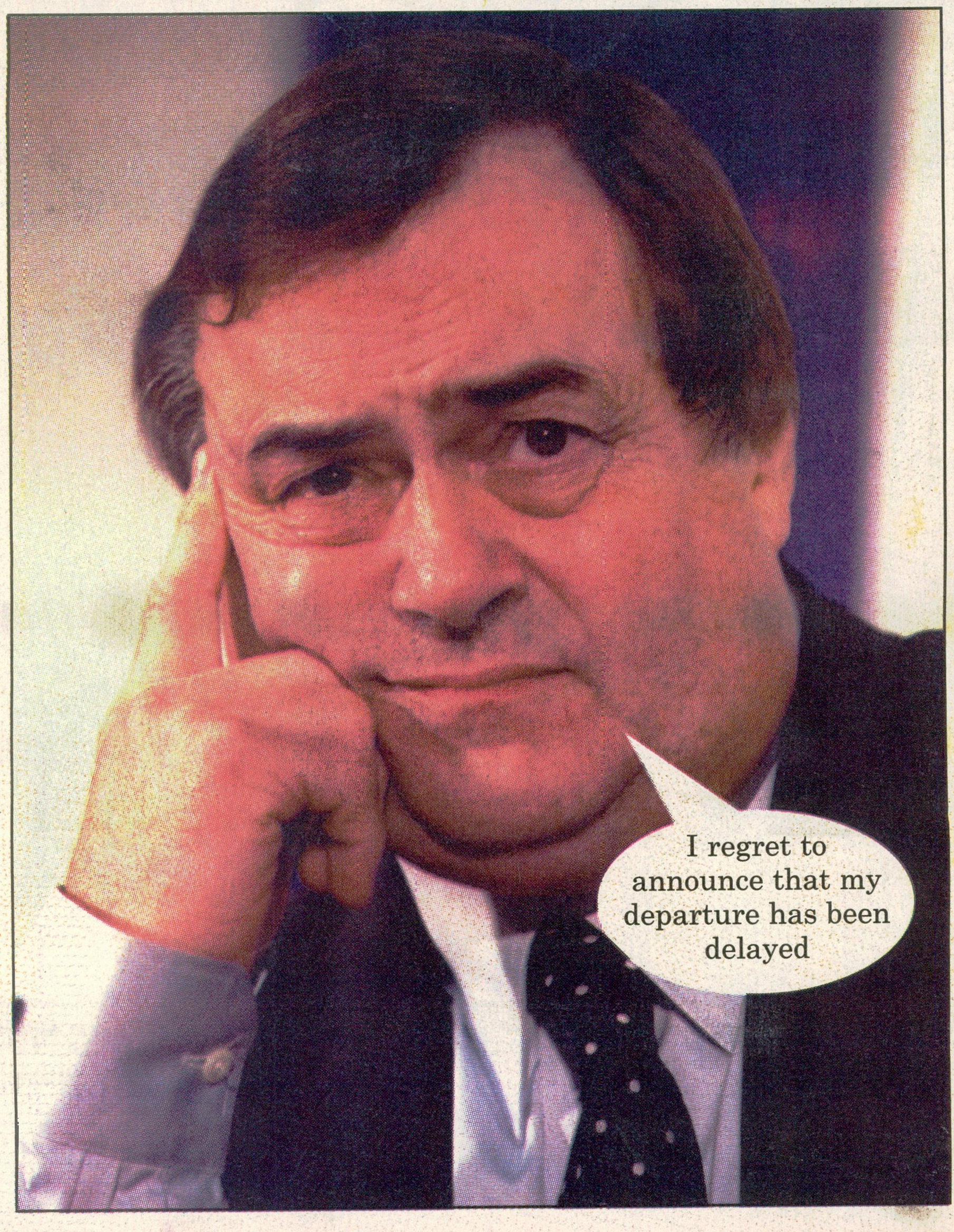

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PE12E

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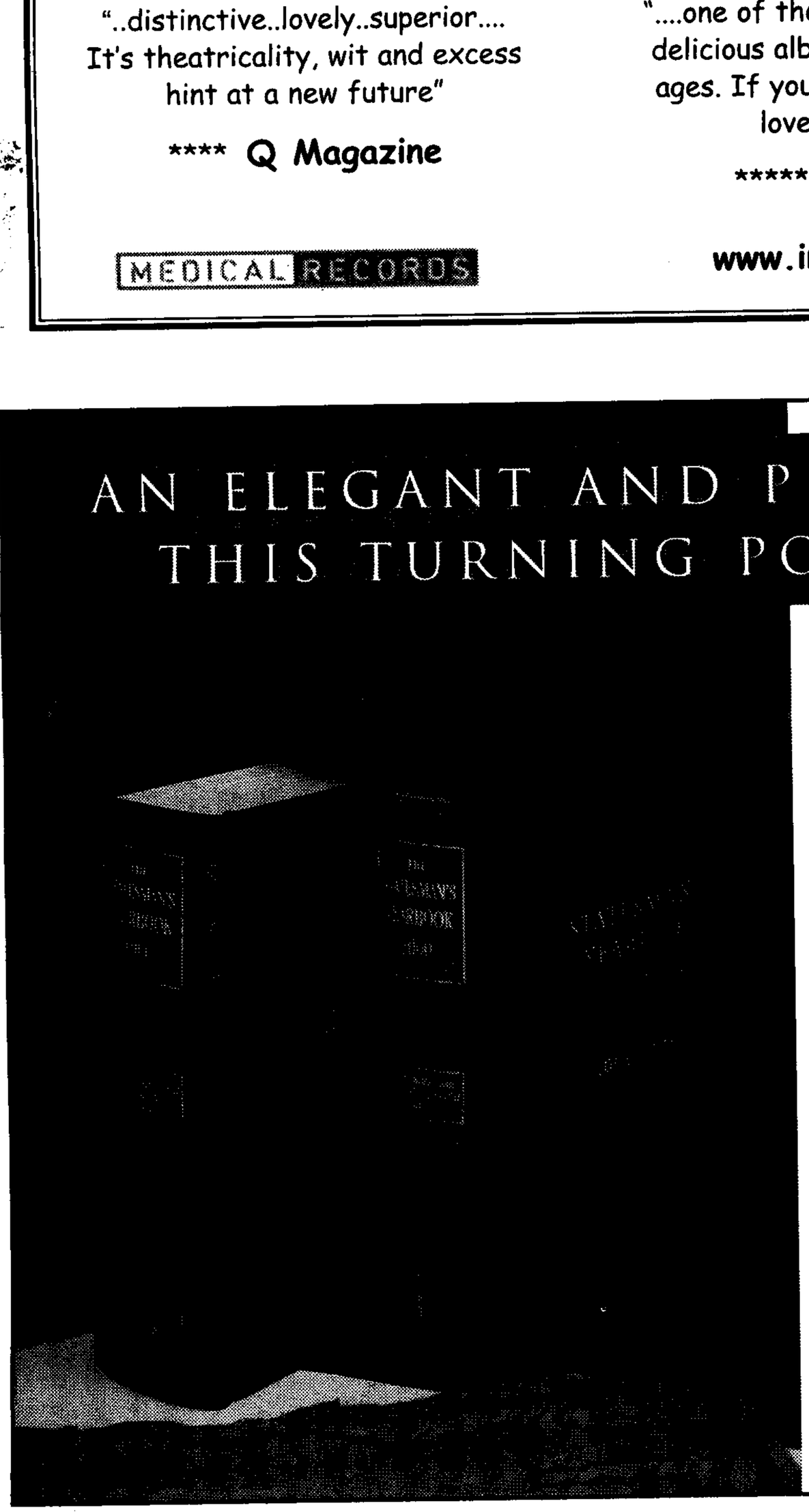

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GRAHAM'S

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Gnome

IT IS with some regret that Fragrance and I have decided not to hold our usual Christmas parties this year, on the grounds that it would be inappropriate to celebrate and that none of you would come anyway. We have decided to spend the festive season alone and to hold a small party for the two of us serving only Humble Pie and vintage water. I may possibly take out an onion at some stage of the proceedings but this will be my only concession to the festivities. This is a gesture to demonstrate just how sorry I am feeling. For myself.

As dictated to Stephan Shakestrobes pp Lord Jeffrey Gnome, The Old Routine, Grantchester, Scams.

"Just throw your hat in the ring, Mr Norris!"

ANNOUNCEMENT

The next edition of Private Eye will be a bumper Christmas/Millennium issue, costing £1.50. It will be on sale for three weeks from Tuesday 21 December — *don't miss it!*

IN THE BUMPER ISSUE

★ *Millennium Gnomemart*
★ *£200 Giant Crossword*
★ *Archer Caption Competition*
★ *Bores of the Millennium*
★ *Hackwatch of the Year*
★ *A Sylvie Krin Story*
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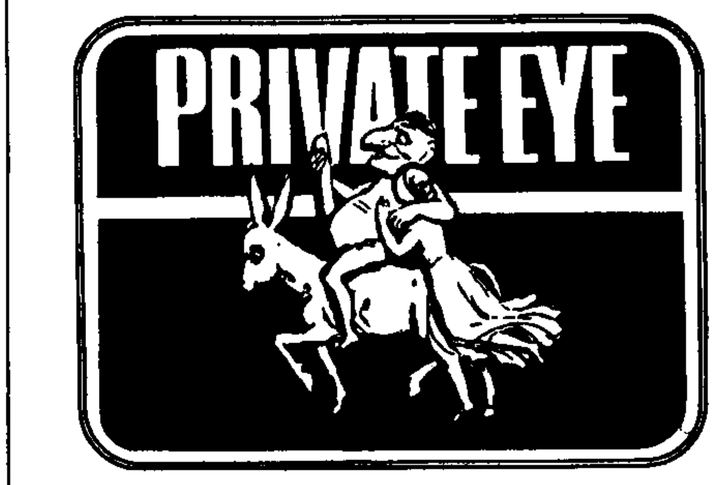


COLOUR SECTION

AS former colleagues of Frank Dobson are dragooned into phoning the Father Christmas lookalike in a vain attempt to cheer the old fella up, news arrives that will genuinely spread cheer to Dobbo and among the legions of dismal "new" Labour fixers.

Dobbo is now virtually certain of winning the party selection race for London mayor over Ken Leninspart and Glenda Jackson, courtesy of the support he is likely to receive from the massed ranks of the South London Co-operative Party, who met — all 14 of them — last Friday evening.

Under the direction of austere Blair babe Kathryn Smith, the Co-op chairman used his casting vote to ban any ballot of the 50,000 card-carrying Co-op members. Instead a "consultation process" was ordered which — surprise, surprise — is unlikely to report until after the votes have been counted elsewhere. By good fortune the same seven officers — in advance of any consultations and with the casting vote of the chairman — will, hey presto, be able to hand a 50,000 block vote to Dobbo!

Since the South London Co-op accounts for nearly 10 percent of the total London Labour vote, Dobbo's victory will be assured. Roll out the barrel! Christmas has come early.

The Prime Minister, Mr Tony Blair, gave his backing to a neutering campaign being run by the National Canine Defence League

Veterinary Record

THE downsizing of John Prescott, aka the Mouth of the Humber, continues.

As the deputy prime minister's long-awaited transport bill unravelled before his eyes, Mansfield MP and longtime ally Alan Meale claimed that Prezza's whispering detractors were the usual "teeny boppers" from the Number 10 policy unit. This is not the first time Prescott or his allies have levelled such a charge. But it loses impetus with each outing.

"Teeny boppers", as Prezza knows, are licensed to brief — none more so than Geoff "Mondeo Man" Norris, a key Blair aide of such mystery that no newspaper has yet managed to publish a photograph of him. The teeny boppers are pressed into action if the Reverend Blair takes fright at his deputy's grandiose schemes for road pricing, or at Prescott's inability to shoot down equally grandiose schemes, courtesy of the Housebuilders Federation, to carpet the home counties with thousands more "executive homes".

Prezza's star has been in the descendant for some time now, as the threat of an "old" Labour-style rebellion against the Rev recedes along with Prezza's hairline.

Prezza found his long stymied attempts to get the public on to buses were not just being unravelled by his own blundering. The road and car lobby, with the tacit support of Reverend Blair, forced Prezza into a series of rapid "U" turns on road pricing and new road building projects.

In addition, Prezza's miserable inheritance, courtesy of departed former treasury minister Geoffrey Robinson, includes the half-baked "Public, Private Finance Initiative" for the London Underground – a scheme savaged by just about the entire world — everyone from the National Institute of Economic and Social Research to the London School of Economics. Prezza's other master stroke — letting Railtrack run part of the Underground — was axed last week.

Poor old Prescott, uncomplaining servant to the ambitions of the raffish Revered Blair! Now he tells friends he wants "out" from the monstrous transport, environment and the regions department (DETR), created as much for his ego as it was for his undoing, and simply to retain the title "deputy prime minister'. The Rev will entertain this amusing thought for precisely two seconds before preparing a plan to pitch Prezza into the Lords after the election.

ALAS, the *Eye* has received reports that the jolly costumes hired out for Lord Archer's millennium bash from the costumier Angels and Bermans in London's West End have been returned en masse.

Among the forlorn garments was said to be a red cardinal's outfit set aside for one "N. Lamont".

Despite the speed of his fall, the peer still found time to try to limit the financial damage of his disgrace. Scarcely had the current scandal exploded in the headlines, than the great party-giver telephoned Alvis's, his cheesemaker in Somerset, to say he wouldn't after all be requiring any of the 347 handcrafted truckles of Cheddar he ordered last March at £25 a time.

The cheese was to be given out at his famous Krug and shepherd's pie Christmas parties (now cancelled), each hand-waxed in black with the peer's monogram picked out in gold. When it was pointed out that staff had been working round the clock for some weeks to get the order ready, Archer reluctantly agreed to pay for 300 cheeses — but not a penny more.

The firm has been reduced to hawking the additional 47 round local markets as "Archer remainders".

THEATREGOERS at the London Globe had the right idea about Lord Archer even before his most recent embarrassment.

The November issue of *Cuesheet*, the magazine for Friends of the Globe, reveals that one particular flagstone in the open air theatre attracts special attention form the public.

"Spitting on Jeffrey Archer — a political hygiene note. The punters' response when noticing they are standing on the mayoral candidate's commemorative flagstone in the Piazza might give the Tories pause."

● *Sorry, I'll edra that again: Grauniad Hackwatch* 7
● *Tories see pink; Straw and Dobbo in the doldrums: HP Sauce* 8
● *Murdoch, Hollick and Green play Monopoly* 26
● *Slicker salutes Kevin Maxwell* 28

NEW-LOOK QUEEN'S XMAS MESSAGE

Street Of Shame

SURELY the Canadian owner of the *Torygraph* stable Conrad Black does not heed columnists on rival newspapers when deciding the political direction of his titles?

Last week saw stinging criticism of the *Daily Torygraph* by the *Guardian*'s Hugo Young who praised the installation of a devolved government in Belfast in the face of a ceaseless campaign by the "representative voice" of British nationalism. To back up the criticism, in his adjacent diary column Matthew Norman noted his concern for *Torygraph* editor Charles Moore and that Moore has irritated Black with his stance on Northern Ireland.

The next day Brian MacArthur in the *Times* media section followed Young's line, describing Moore's paper as: "The strident house organ of the embittered Little Englander wing of the Tory party". The word at Canary Wharf is that Black has been sufficiently moved to drag Moore out of his plus-fours and into his office to suggest that a little sucking up to the Blairites would not now go amiss.

It is still pretty rich of the *Times* to criticise a newspaper for reflecting its editor's views. As they know perfectly well at Wapping, a newspaper should reflect its *proprietor's* views.

When MacArthur concludes that the *Telegraph* has indeed "lost its touch" by abandoning "even-handed reporting" and "permitting the conversion of journalism into propaganda", readers might want to suppress the odd snigger. Particularly when, adjacent to this even-handed roasting of its more successful rival, the *Times* fills the rest of the page with a brown-nosed advertorial for its stable mate Talk Radio, masquerading as an article by radio critic Peter Barnard.

EVEN Conrad Black, it seems, feels Charles Moore may be spending rather too much time cultivating his country-squire image – a view heartily endorsed by some of Moore's colleagues at the *Daily Telegraph*.

One of them rang the editor at home recently for an urgent consultation, only to be told by Charles's fragrant wife Caroline that "you can't speak to him – he's out cubbing".

"WE will leave the boys alone," promised the press after the death of Princess Diana and again when the press complaints commission (PCC) set out new guidelines for reporting on Princes William and Harry in April.

The code states that while weekly front page headlines concerning the princes are unacceptable, occasional inside page articles in the public interest are admissible.

Now the PCC and the Prince of Wales's private office have been in talks again following a series of articles severely criticising Prince William for riding to hounds.

The worst culprit is the *Express,* which splashed on 30 November with a headline calling William "Arrogant". The paper quoted the League Against Cruel Sports, which described Princess Diana as "totally anti-hunt" and continued: "William's decision — or more likely that of his advisers — is like riding roughshod over her memory."

On the same day the *Mirror* ran the headline "Shamefaced", accompanying a photograph of William mopping his brow after a hunt (or shielding his face from angry anti-hunt protesters?) This is despite *Mirror* editor Piers Moron having specifically agreed to abide by the code — which was itself a response to an official complaint made against the *Mirror* by Prince Charles following the paper's revelation that Harry bruised his arm playing rugby at Eton.

Nor is the *Express* alone in baiting the prince with his mother's memory. On 1 November the *Mirror* showed the utmost delicacy for the feelings of the young prince when it quoted the Hunt Saboteurs Association opining: "Prince William's mother is probably turning in her grave."

IT IS hard these days to get an appointment to see Jan Thompson, managing editor of the *Independent* titles, because of the number of hacks queuing to complain about being bullied and sworn at by *Independent on Sunday* editor Janet Street-Porter.

JS-P's Kelvin Mackenzie-style effing and blinding, which perhaps would seem less shocking at the *Sun* or *Daily Star*, is something of a novelty to the gentle creatures who work on the once-cerebral *Sindie* and they do not like it. Women in particular seem to suffer from Janet's rages, which are egged on by her creepy, model-railway obsessed deputy, Michael Williams.

Hackettes who have decided enough is enough and quit include Isabel Berwick and Hilary Clarke, respectively numbers one and two on the business desk. Picture editor Sophie Batterbury is off for a quieter life on the daily. Formal complaints to Thompson about Street-Porter and Williams have been lodged by two female reporters, one of whom was repeatedly told her copy was "*FAKHIN' FAKHIN' CRAP*" at top volume in front of colleagues. Who would have thought the day would come when journalists at the *Indie* would furtively swap the telephone number of the UK Workplace Bullying advice line?

READERS of the *Independent* may have been even more puzzled than usual by Sally Ann Lasson's dismal "As if" cartoon strip in last Friday's Review section.

It featured a man and a woman discussing a colleague. "If she's got 16 million quid, why does she want a job?" asks the woman. "She needs a job so that she can spread exactly the right amount of poison and venom around," says the man.

"Oh," says the woman. "Hasn't she got a home life?"

One may think this pointless and not funny, but one would only be half right. It does have a point — although the reader is not let in on it.

Sally Ann Lasson, once described as "the Violet Elizabeth Bott of the one-night stand", is an enthusiast of matters Ugandan who once went on an dirty weekend in Paris with Earl Spencer and then sold her story to the *News of the World*. These days she is a close friend of *Independent* editor-in-chief Simon "Pussy" Kelner.

Back in the summer Kelner sacked Kim Fletcher as editor of the *Independent on Sunday*. Fletcher's deputy, the posh, rich and thin Rebecca Nicholson, resigned in disgust and promptly wrote a mildly rude piece about the whole business in the *Torygraph*. This annoyed Kelner considerably. Nicholson now has a new job, as head of her own publishing company. Her personal fortune is believed (wrongly) by her former *Sindie* colleagues to total around... £16m, and Nicholson is single. *Geddit?* [*Still not funny. Ed.*]

IT ISN'T easy being green – as Clifford Hards, proprietor of the ecologically sound national newspaper *Planet on Sunday*, can testify.

Hards, a package-tour tycoon from Solihull, first tried to launch his *Planet* into orbit in June 1996. "It all looks fairly secure," he told *UK Press Gazette* when the first issue appeared, boasting that he had sold 342,000 copies – "well past the breakeven point of 142,000". Alas! Two days later he announced that the paper was ceasing publication forthwith, having actually sold only 115,000 copies.

Hards blamed the *debacle* on "a series of mistakes on my part in that I delegated the whole business of putting the paper together to others" – though an additional problem may have been a story in the *Mail on Sunday* on the very day of the 1996 launch, headlined " 'Green' Wife Sold Stale Food", which revealed that Hards's wife, Helena, had "admitted stocking rotten rolls and a vegetable pasty at her shop in Solihull".

Three years on, undaunted, Hards is trying again. Launch date was set for 28 November, and *UK Press Gazette* ran its traditional puff-piece the week before. "I am absolutely confident we are going to be better than last time round," Hards declared confidently, adding that the initial print-run was to be 350,000 copies.

Alas again! Readers who rushed to their newsagents on the morning of 28 November could find no trace of Hards's mighty green organ. The entire launch issue had been aborted for "technical reasons".

100 Years Ago

● *WHY on earth has the grubby* News of the World *unleashed a team of reporters with the instruction: find Miss Andrina Colquhoun?*

They surely don't think that Miss Colquhoun, Jeffrey Archer's erstwhile personal assistant, can help them in their High Court action?

Private Eye 669, 7 August '87

I ATTEND the Polish Ball and renew my acquaintance with the former PR man to Jeffrey Archer, the saintly Michael Stackpoole.

Michael tells me that things between him and Jeffrey have not been too good since the fateful day when he tried to give a certain lady cash at Victoria Station. He claims that Archer now hates him and cannot understand why.

The tired and emotional Michael then confides that although Jeffrey has been very good to him he was hoping for rather more largesse from his employer. How very ungrateful.

Private Eye 702, 11 November '88

A CERTAIN touchiness appears to be developing at the *Sunday Times*'s Belfast office.

Not content with joining the queue of litigants over Channel 4's documentary *The Committee* (see *Eyes passim*), Northern Ireland correspondent Liam Clarke has also demanded an apology from Chris Patten, author of the much-criticised report on the Royal Ulster Constabulary.

Given Clarke's established willingness to consult m'learned friends, Patten decided to surrender at once. Bizarrely, therefore, the following announcement has appeared in the Irish edition of the *Sunset Times* and on the *Times* website:

"*Apology to Liam Clarke*. On 2 September 1999, Mr Chris Patten publicly complained about predictions in the press regarding what was allegedly contained in the unpublished report of the Independent Commission on Policing for Northern Ireland... Mr Patten has been informed that some people have interpreted his comments as an attack on the professional integrity of Mr Clarke. This was never Mr Patten's intention and he unreservedly disavows any such suggestion. He sincerely apologises to Mr Clarke, whose high professional standards he readily acknowledges."

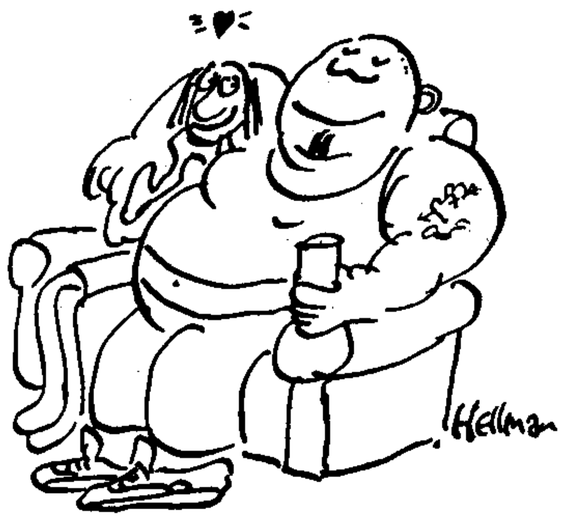
Is this the first time in history that a national newspaper has been forced to print a grovelling apology to one of its own staff?

THE president of FG Wilson, the Larne-based engineering business, is Mr Dick Nitto and not Nick Ditto as stated in Business Telegraph yesterday.

Belfast Telegraph

"Oh, come on, Ref — I hit my missus . harder than that!"

GREY ARIAS



"Porki Amor"

KOW-TOW CORNER

DESPITE the furore provoked by Tony Blair's kowtowing to Chinese president Jiang Zemin, "new" Labour is about to plunge headfirst into the bird's nest soup again.

Cherie Blair is hosting a dinner on 18 January at the New Hoo Wah restaurant in Soho, London, to launch Chinese For Labour — a group "formed to promote the values and principles of the Labour Party, and to encourage the participation of the Chinese community in the British political arena". Guests of honour at the £50-a-head banquet include Frank Dobson, Trevor Phillips and Mrs Katy Tse Blair, Tony's Chinese sister-in-law.

Labour's values and principles supposedly include a vague commitment to human rights. Exiled pro-democracy campaigners may therefore be surprised to learn that the other "distinguished guest" is to be Madame Xiaodong Chen, wife of His Excellency Mr Zhengang Ma, ambassador of the People's Republic of China.

THE standard Murdoch line of sucking up to China was observed in the *Times* obit on 23 November of Sir Philip Haddon-Cave, chief secretary of the Hong Kong colonial government until his retirement in 1985.

"He will be remembered in Hong Kong as one of the architects of the stability and prosperity that the people enjoy now as an autonomous region of China," droned the author in authentic Xinhua News Agency style.

But what's this? In the *Sunday Times* on 21 November a dissident view creeps in. In the paper's serialisation of Woodrow Wyatt's diaries we find this entry for 4 June 1989: "Rupert rang. Very worked up about China and all these murders taking place [the Tiananmen massacre]. He said we should break off diplomatic relations at once and cancel the agreement with China over Hong Kong."

So who was this bleeding heart liberal of a Rupert? Step forward none other than R. Murdoch — in the days before he had built up a huge satellite TV empire in the Far East.

O·B·N

Cate Blanchett, who took on the formidable task of playing Susan Traherne in Plenty, agrees. "I'd never been more nervous in my life when he [David Hare] came to see the play. But he knew just when to come in and when to come out. His notes to us were poetry. Some of his insights, not just into Susan but into humanity generally, made me weep."

CATE BLANCHETT
Guardian

Nominated by Andrew Maud.

£10 paid for entries put forward for the Order of the Brown Nose.

HACKWATCH — The Grauniad

Shome Mishtakes

NOT since Sisyphus has a man had a more impossible task than Ian Mayes, who edits the *Guardian*'s "Corrections and Clarifications" column.

"As I complete two years as the Readers' Editor," he wrote last month, "the question I am most frequently asked is: 'Do you think you have made the slightest bit of difference, particularly in the level of accuracy?' Well, no."

In 1998 he printed nearly 1,200 corrections; this year it is 1,500. But he keeps rolling that stone up the hill, because "I see the corrections column as an essential element in the way the paper describes itself to readers". Here are just a few recent samples of that description...

7 October: "On page 8 of Monday's sport section we captioned a picture: 'Mark Rivers swoops in on Tranmere Rovers' Alan Mahon during Crewe Alexandra's 2-0 win.' The Crewe player was Shaun Smith, not Mark Rivers. The Tranmere player was Dave Challinor, not Alan Mahon. Crewe did not win 2-0. They lost 2-0."

13 October: "In one of our editions yesterday the poem *Cost of Life* was attributed to Andrew Morton, 'the poet laureate', a title held by the real author of the piece, Andrew Motion. Andrew Morton is the biographer of Princess Diana and Monica Lewinsky... Apologies to both."

19 October: "The building illustrating Simon Hoggart's Diary, page 12, Saturday Review, 16 October, was not Cheltenham town hall, as the caption suggested it might be. It was Boots the Chemist."

23 October: "Action Man, referred to in our piece about the shortlist for the toy of the century, page 11, yesterday, is a product of Hasbro, the firm that sells Monopoly — not Hambro, as we mistakenly said. Hambro is a merchant bank."

29 October: "On page 19 of northern editions of G2, 26 October, we referred to a work by the jazz composer Nikki Yeoh in which, we said, 'Yeoh himself plays the piano'. Nikki Yeoh is a woman. Apologies."

3 November: "Readers who felt there was something familiar about the Diary of a Hypochondriac, page 9, G2, yesterday, are advised not to worry. It was an exact repeat of a column first run two weeks ago. Apologies."

6 November: Better late than never: "In reproducing a report from the *Guardian*, 11 July 1932, headed The Princess of the Mediterranean, we repeated its description of the Douglas, the Codrington and the Keith as submarines. They were, in fact, destroyers. Sorry for the delay in making that correction." Meanwhile, back to the present day: "In a brief, page 6, yesterday, headed Thief's £50,000 Knicker Haul, some of the details were wrong, for which we apologise. Nadarajah Jeyakumar was given two years' probation for stealing one pair of knickers (not £50,000 worth)."

9 November: "There were a good many mistakes in our sidebar, US Milestones, which accompanied the pages of The American Century yesterday. Here are some of them. The Wright brothers' aircraft was not the Kitty Hawk... Charles Lindbergh was not the first person to fly the Atlantic... The US effectively declared war on Germany in December 1941 rather than 1942..." Et cetera. Oh, and "the singer to whom we meant to refer in our piece about Spain, page 6, Travel, 6 November, was not the Scottish sounding Cameron, but Camarón, the great flamenco star".

10 November: "A missing line in a report on page 12 yesterday made us refer to the relationship 'between Mr Brown and thing' when we meant to refer to Mr Brown and Mr Mandelson... Apologies."

12 November: "Contrary to the impression we gave in our G2 feature, Once Were Warriors, page 2, 9 November, there are no Wrens in the army."

13 November: "Tamas Vasary who appeared in our Birthdays column, page 20, 8 November, age 66, had already appeared in the column at that age on 11 August. We were right the first time."

15 November: A most important correction to "our television programme notes, 12 November, for *A Town Has Turned to Dust*, in which 'a Native American is unjustly lunched for raping the bossman's wife'."

17 November: "A caption in *Guardian Weekend*, page 102, 13 November, read, 'Binch of crappy travel mags'. That should, of course, have been 'bunch'. But more to the point it should not have been there at all. It was a dummy which we failed to replace with the real caption. It was not meant to be a comment on perfectly good travel brochures. Apologies."

19 November: "The presenter of the Carlton Debate on ITV, 16 November, was Alastair Stewart, not — as we promised it would be in our programme notes — Alastair Campbell."

24 November: "Vastogirardi, the village with a dwindling population in southern Italy, page 21, 20 November, would be conspicuous rather than 'anonymous amid the Pennine mountains'. The spinal mountains of Italy are the Apennines."

25 November: "In our article about the jockey Pat Eddery, page 33, 23 November, we said he had ridden four Derby winners which we listed as: Grundy (1975), El Gran Senor (1984), Law Society (1985) and Commander In Chief (1993). The first one, Grundy, is correct. All the others are wrong."

26 November: "The animal which met an unfortunate end at the hands of The Kid in the Corner, Channel 4, was a guinea pig, not a gerbil (Last night's TV, page 22, G2, yesterday)."

30 November: "In a column, page 5, *Guardian Weekend*, 27 November, we said that Matt Drudge fell out with the Fox television network over its refusal to allow him to display on screen a photograph of a 21-month-old foetus. We should have said 21 weeks... In our article about the coverage of art on television, page 17, G2, yesterday, we described the subject of Andrew Graham-Dixon's Renaissance series as 'the rebirth of art and culture in the middle of this century'. We meant to say in the middle of this millennium."

1 December: "Two sentences were omitted from a letter by Roger Crisp (Weekend, page 5, 13 November) on Kevin Toolis's article about Peter Singer. Roger Crisp was not claiming that disabled people should be killed."

2 December. Another first, as the *Grauniad* apologises to a monarch who has been dead for 2000 years: "King Herod, the subject of Pass Notes, 30 November, lived, rather than ruled, from 73BC to 4BC."

Still, as Ian Mayes concluded in his latest annual report, "we'll see if we can do better in the next millennium".

SUPERMODELS

KERBER

MADE ANY PLANS FOR THE BIG NEW YEAR'S EVE THEN?
AGENCY
PORTFOLIO
WELL, FIRSTLY I'M GOING TO GO OUT, DO LOADS OF DRUGS AND CHAMPAGNE...
... THEN I'M GOING THINK ABOUT WHAT I'M GOING TO DO ON NEW YEAR'S EVE!

IN THE TEAROOM

THE Tory party has long seen the issue of gay sex as rather like immigration – essentially a question of numbers. There are exceptions, of course.

Lord Tebbit insists on his cricket test for citizenship and is genuinely disgusted by what he continues to call "sodomy". But for a long time the party in general has had an easy-come, easy-go attitude to gays in public life. Indeed, for many years the Conservative research department made it seem as if an element of — at the very least — bisexuality was an essential requirement for advancement up the ladder of preferment.

Odd then, how this shadow cabinet — pinker at the edges than any before — should so misjudge the public mood on clause 28 and sack Sean Woodward from the frontbench. Odd too that the row should come just after Michael Portillo got back in at Kensington & Chelsea, and when two openly gay men, Andrew Boff and Ivan Massow, are in contention for the mayoral candidacy in London. And odder still how the only prominent Tory apologists for tolerance have been two men with hyper-het credentials — Steve Norris' orientation is a matter of public record, while no one who has encountered the gorgeous, pouting Camilla Sainsbury could for one minute believe that Mrs Shaun Woodward is a "beard"; which is more than one could say about a number of Tory spouses.

Behind this cock-up is the increasingly risible figure of James Arbuthnot, the chief whip. Rather like Norman Fowler, who turned white when department of health officials spelled out the mechanics of gay sex at the start of the Aids campaign, Arbuthnot only troubled to find out precisely what homosexuals actually do to one another after Portillo's self-outing. He still hasn't got over the shock.

The consequences of Woodward's sacking are easily imagined. Institutional hypocrisy being a red rag to any tabloid bull, greasy hacks are already making nudges and winks about the leader's friendship with Alan Duncan and his judo trysts with Sebastian Coe in Lord Archer's gym. It won't come to anything with Hague, of course. But along the way someone is bound to dig up some stories on the lesser Tories. Will it be the one about the campaign aide sexually harassed during a by-election, or those Friday night taxi outings from central office to giggle along the Edgware Road? Oh dear.

'Urquhart'

LAST week was supposed to be the home office's hard-hitting "crime week" — the launch of a series of anti-crime initiatives that would keep our have-a-go home secretary in the daily headlines.

So what thrilling announcements did he make?

An extension of the home curfew, electronic tagging of villains — a Tory idea met with much derision by Labour.

Three strikes and you're out, the automatic jail sentence for repeat burglars – a Tory idea met with some concern by the Labour opposition.

More money for closed circuit television to monitor crime hotspots – another Tory idea. The allocation of 5,000 new police recruits... More drug referral schemes... A new priority for key performance indicators for police... The setting up of the Property Crime Reduction Action Team... So desperate for a headline was the home office that on Thursday ministers decided to announce a new name for the probation service — and came up with the snappy title "The Community Punishment and Rehabilitation Service" — or CPARS (already mutated to CRAPS).

The home office has set up in internal inquiry to find out why Crime Week bombed. Perhaps Jack Straw's U-turns and the recycling of old Tory gimmicks are no longer news.

SHOULD Prescott press for an early introduction of a public, private partnership (PPP) for the London Underground to scupper Ken Livingstone's pledge to fund the ailing tube network through bond issues, he would do well to have a quiet word with his studious deputy, Lord Gus MacDonald.

MacDonald recently wrote to ministerial colleague Barbara Roche assuring her that "we have always stated that we will not set a politically driven timetable for implementing the PPP; we are determined that the final deal must be right."

MacDonald goes on to offer a chink of light to the myriad expert groups that have derided the PPP commitment. "We believe that the PPP for London Underground will offer best value; indeed we have stated that if this proves not to be the case we will not proceed." Prezza should demand to see a copy of MacDonald's letter immediately.

AS the Rev Blair heads north to dispel the notion of a growing poverty gap between the Labour-voting north and Tory-voting south, he should avoid travelling on the A19 between the former Durham pit towns of Seaham and Murton.

During "northern night" at Labour's conference, Blair promised "to work with every sinew in my body to solve the region's problems". But locals there are furious at Blair for not having stretched a muscle on their behalf. With 18,000 signatures and 2,000 letters, all demanding a long awaited decision on plans to turn an old colliery into a new shopping and leisure centre creating many new jobs, precisely nothing has happened.

Now residents of the Dalton Flatts area have written to John Prescott, whose department must give the go ahead for the scheme but is dragging its feet. They remind Prescott of his fighting talk in a speech to the National Coalfield Conference in Peterlee in December 1998, where regeneration of brown field areas was deemed a top priority. "This," said Prescott, onion in hand, "is the start of our long-term commitment to regenerating the coalfields. We must keep up momentum [sic]. We must now carry this forward in the short term and the long term. We are all accountable for making this a success." Except for John Prescott, of course.

WEST Lancashire MP Colin Pickthall, parliamentary private secretary to home secretary Jack Straw, loftily ignored the *Eye*'s questions in issue 990 about how his 1997 return of general election expenses came to contain receipts bearing forged signatures*.

Thickpall has been reassuring worried local party members that the election return, prepared by his former agent, Lancashire county council deputy leader Frank McKenna, was tickety-boo. In a letter to party members he appeared to suggest that the *Eye* is engaged in a conspiracy with a local free newspaper, *The Champion*, which has pluckily followed up our stories, to "destroy" the West Lancashire Labour party.

Someone with a less barmy view of the *Eye*'s stories is Inspector Knacker. Although Pickthall himself is not suspected of any offence, two very senior officers from Lancashire police HQ's major crime unit visited him at the end of November as part of their ongoing, wide-ranging investigations.

**** A selection of these can viewed at the Eye's website from 10 December: www.private-eye.co.uk***

LONDON Labour MPs will get to vote early and often in early February as they party finally chooses between Dobson, Livingstone and Jackson for mayoral candidate. Here is how those votes stack-up:

London Labour MPs command a third of the party's electoral college, with the unions and the members comprising the other two thirds. Thus each MP's vote will be worth 7,000 times more than that of an ordinary member.

Under new rules rushed in by Labour's national executive committee (NEC), the MPs' ballot papers will be marked and every vote will be recorded for posterity — or more likely, retribution. However, each MP is also a member of a constituency party and will be accorded another vote — less decisive to be sure, but this time at least, secret. And since every London Labour MP is also member of a trade union, they will have yet another secret vote.

Being able to vote in all three sections has its advantages for the most dismal of on-message MPs: some will undoubtedly be able to tell members they voted for the "unity ticket" — in other words all three candidates managed to garner their support.

DOBBO's feeble attempts to muscle into a simmering union dispute at Heathrow airport, to steal some thunder from Ken Livingstone and suck up to union members, have backfired.

Hearing that Leninspart had joined T&G pickets taking industrial action against Lufthansa and spoken in their support, the magisterial Dobbo asked the T&G if it would like to send "a delegation to come and see me". The horny-handed sons of toil replied in no uncertain terms: "We don't come and see you — you come and see us."

Meanwhile the Dobbo campaign team, irreparably damaged by the arrival of key campaigners Phil Woolas MP and former David Blunket aide Conor Ryan, is bracing itself for a *Panorama* special next Monday. Dobbo aides worry that footage of the Buster Merrifield lookalike blowing a gasket at the *Panorama* crew on board a London bus may not end up on the cutting room floor.

SO farewell then, Michael "Lunchtime" O'Halloran, former Labour MP for Islington North, who has died at the age of 66. Curiously, no tribute has yet emerged from Downing Street, even though O'Halloran was a stalwart fighter against the Left.

Does Blair feel, perhaps, that Mike's methods were a little crude even by the strong-arm standards of "new" Labour?

O'Halloran maintained his dominance of the Islington North party by the simple expedient of expelling anyone who disagreed with him. One man who moved to the constituency in the 1970s recalls going to the local party office and asking to join – only to be told "sorry, we're full up". To ensure that no undesirables smuggled themselves in he formed a praetorian guard of local Irish Catholics, including several burly bouncers from the Gresham Ballroom in Holloway.

The *Guardian*'s obituary last week described him as "amiable, if incoherent". The second adjective, at least, is certainly true. On one occasion, a Labour committee of inquiry asked whether he had received money from a local sympathiser. "Categorically – er – no," Lunchtime replied. "Unless I was drunk at the time."

6.0 Six O'Clock News
6.30 True Lies
7.0 The Archers
7.15 Front Row

Grauniad

POOR Christine Hamilton is terribly protective of her husband's reputation.

She was behind the recent withdrawal from sale of *Nature Notes: the New Collection* by Times cartoonist Peter Brookes, objecting to the couple's depiction as a toad and a vixen. Publishers Little, Brown, anxious not to miss valuable Christmas sales, pulped the books and rushed out a reprint — but not before la Hamilton came upon three copies of the original at Politico's in London. With a manic grin she ripped out the offending pages and refused to pay for the damaged books.

JOHN REDWOOD is still fairly new to the Tories' transport job so he can't be expected to know much about the subject. But someone really ought to tell him that the more he shouts about Labour being "anti-car", the more anti-car he makes the Tories look.

The biggest problem facing drivers (outside rural areas) is not the cost of motoring (which has not risen as fast as the cost of train travel over past decades) but congested roads. Therefore, the most pro-car action a government can take is to reduce congestion.

Labour's transport policy *is* anti-car — but only because it is too weak and too slow. Labour's key proposal for congestion charging (where motorists pay to use the busiest roads) to raise money for transport investment will not be introduced until 2005 at the earliest. Meanwhile, there is still no sign of the £17bn the government needs to pump into the rail network (on top of what Railtrack should spend) over 10 years to create the capacity to reduce road congestion.

Fear of a backlash from angry motorists is the main reason the policy is too weak and slow. The more Redwood cries "anti-car!", the more Blair will run scared and the weaker and slower any action on transport will become.

Redwood doesn't understand the absurdity of his implied alternatives (he has given no concrete ideas about funding for new roads or public transport). Reducing the cost of motoring and building more roads would increase traffic and exacerbate the motorist's worst enemy — congestion. Traffic would grow faster than we could accommodate the extra cars on costly new roads, and no road expansion is practical in most city centres.

The Tories realised all this when they were in power. Having promised the biggest road-building programme since the Romans, they eventually halted the programme and began to increase the cost of fuel. Redwood is now criticising Labour for following his own party's lead and seems not to realise what a fool that makes him.

'Backbiter'

NOOKS and CORNERS

IS ANYWHERE safe? With the clamour to build four million or so new "homes" in England, who can resist the pressure? Certainly not Alnwick district council to judge by its devious and shambolic behaviour over the old Coach House at Eglingham, Northumberland.

The former coach house to the vicarage is, or was, a decent, unassuming vernacular building. It is listed grade II and stands in a village which is a conservation area — a fat lot of use when the local authority is keen on development. The coach house certainly needs attention: it is derelict. Unfortunately, in the scheme for conversion and enlargement prepared by an anonymous hack with the council's encouragement, parts of the old walls are to be taken down, the internal plaster stripped and an extension added in the Executive Homes Swiss Chalet style.

Despite local opposition Alnwick district council first granted itself planning permission and listed building consent for this, but then hesitated over granting listed building consent for a modified scheme — as well it might as, whether through ignorance or contempt, it had not bothered to consult any of the concerned amenity bodies as the law requires.

Claire Cardinal, of the "development control section", even wrote: "I do not consider Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings to be a statutory consultee" and had to be reminded by the society (which objected to the plans) that the secretary of state "directs" local authorities to give notice of applications for listed building consent to itself along with the Ancient Monuments Society, the Georgian Group, the Victorian Society, the Royal Commission and others.

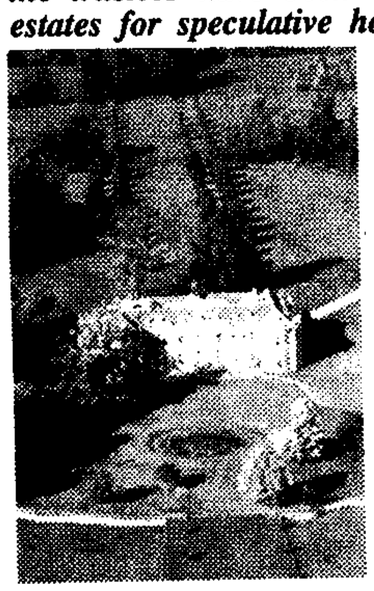
But Alnwick knows best: not only failing to inform English Heritage of the application as well (despite the impact of the Swiss chalet on the adjoining churchyard with its ancient church of St Maurice), but also ignoring the opposition of Northumberland county council.

It is therefore no surprise that at a full council meeting in October listed building consent was granted — if by one vote. It thereby avoided the danger of being sued by the applicant, something which has been on the councillors minds since their attempt to overturn the government's policy on out-of-town shopping centres on behalf of a cancelled proposed supermarket outside Alnwick failed in the high court in August, leaving Messrs Safeway demanding compensation. With local authorities like this, who needs enemies?

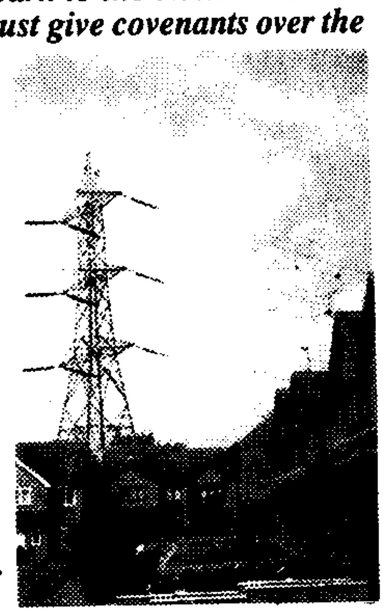
CAN anyone be trusted to look after England? Not, it would seem, the trustees of a trust dedicated to doing precisely that, to judge by what is going on at Hartwell near Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire.

The Hartwell estate, with its grand Jacobean and Georgian house and enchanting (but now ruined) Gothick church, was bought by Ernest Cook in 1938. Cook, grandson of Thomas Cook of travel agent fame, dedicated the latter part of his life and fortune to saving historic houses, beautiful landscapes and works of art. He acquired such famous houses as Buscot and Montacute, which he gave to the National Trust, and at his death left his paintings to the National Art Collections Fund. Three years earlier, in 1952, Cook established an independent charitable trust to own and preserve his remaining properties — including his favourite, Hartwell.

Under charity law at the time, to avoid death duties the Ernest Cook Trust had to devote its income solely to educational purposes, which it did and does. But the principle, overriding aim was, as Cook wrote in the trust deed, "that the landed estates comprising the Trust property shall be preserved and managed in accordance with the best traditions of the great estates of this country". Curious, therefore, that since 1965 the trustees have been releasing parts of Cook's estates for speculative housing developments. And horrifying that they are now doing this with growing ruthlessness and cynicism. Ernest Cook, after all, voluntarily offered the Hartwell estate as part of the metropolitan green belt in 1948. But in 1990 the Ernest Cook Trust successfully applied to Buckingham county council to be released from this green belt covenant, in total contradiction of Cook's recorded intentions. Why?


Hartwell House

The suburban houses the trust are building on the edge of Aylesbury are undistinguished, mediocre, dreadful: standard red and pink brick Noddy boxes. In 1998, Star Lodge, a sweet little "Old English" building, was demolished to make way for an approach road to the 2,700-house "Fairford Leys" development, complete with roundabouts and street lamps. So much for the countryside. Fortunately a lease on Hartwell House itself was taken in 1986 by Historic House Hotels, who have carefully restored the altered and damaged building — otherwise the Ernest Cook Trustees would probably have made it into a MacDonald's. Historic House Hotels has now given covenants over Hartwell House and its part of the park to the National Trust. So will the Ernest Cook Trust give covenants over the rest of the park? No, of course not.


Ellen St development

Why are the Ernest Cook Trustees — chairman, Sir William Benyon, "Clubs: Boodle's, Pratt's, Beefsteak" — indulging in such irresponsible vandalism with such enthusiasm? No case has been made that any of the educational purposes which the trust supports desperately needs help. It is as if the Thatcherite and Blairite worship of money and management has now infected every aspect of our national life. How else to account for this shabby, mindless betrayal of the intentions of a man who really did care about the future?

'Piloti'

CHRISTMAS BOOKS

"Best by far was THE CRAIG BROWN OMNIBUS — £11.99. Craig Brown has a brilliant ear for awfulness."

✹

"Welcome back to ST ALBION PARISH NEWS, £4.99, the second volume of letters from the trendy and slightly menacing vicar."

Oliver Pritchett, *Sunday Telegraph*

CURTAIN UP ON THE PEOPLE'S OPERA HOUSE

It's not all over until the ghastly lady dies
Here's £100 — go and buy an ice cream
Is it time to go to sleep yet?
It goes on and on and on and on...

TV

2000 to 1 (BBC1)
OK! TV (ITV)

DURING the inevitable pre-millennial stock-taking of the new inventions of this century, it's a common journalistic device to show a photograph of, say, a Henry Ford prototype alongside the latest showroom car or a snap of the first transatlantic plane alongside the next generation of jumbos. The message is clear: look how far we've come.

Television, however, is a strange example of an invention with which this then-and-now game doesn't really work. If you put the shows from the medium's infancy alongside the programmes being created in the final month of 1999, you're more likely to have a sense of creative deterioration.

What, for example, is the last big idea of the century on the network created by Lord Reith? Dismayed by the ratings mayhem caused by ITV's *Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?*, this year the corporation has responded with **2000 to 1** (BBC1), a quiz climaxing on the last day of 1999, in which one contestant will be allowed to take a year off work with all wages paid and the same sum again as spending money.

The whole thing is very BBC. Although the show is a blatant ratings gamble, it's insidiously suggested that the enterprise is morally superior to *Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?* Each entrant — there are 400 at the start of every episode — makes a contribution to charity and — when quizzed by co-host Katy Hill on what they'll do if they win — a surprising number indicate that they work with charities in Africa.

But this altriustic overlay can't distract from the fact that the show fails as populist entertainment. *Who Wants...?* works because of clarity of format, consistent tension and tangible cash prizes ready to be taken home. Here the set-up is too messy.

It's never made clear how the BBC can guarantee that the winner's employer will agree to the rules (the job will apparently also be kept open to be reclaimed) or if there is a salary cap for entrants. Suppose, for example, that a million-a-year tax lawyer won. And — with 400 contestants at the start – it's impossible to identify with contestants until the very end.

It's also odd — given the BBC's hints of a superior kind of quiz show — that the questions (example: "Who was born first? Richard Wilson or Richard Madeley?") are far simpler than the notoriously donnish posers in the later stages of *Who Wants?*

And, where Chris Tarrant may be guilty of hammily raising the tension with his pauses and grimaces, main *2000 to 1* presenter Michael Parkinson has the more worrying opposite effect of reducing the drama through his embarrassed contempt for format and script. Asked to deliver scripted atmosphere builders – "This is the quiz with heart, the show with soul — the hard game with the soft centre!" or "I'm a ruthless man and I've got a ruthless plan!" — he giggles to distance himself from the autocue.

While BBC1 tries to be ITV and fails, public service television◊s only compensation is that ITV — despite recent rhetoric about heading upmarket to become a BBC-with-ads — has plunged further downmarket.

OK! TV (ITV) is a video version of the chummy-about-luvvies magazine which is *Hello!*'s main rival. GMTV co-presenter Fiona Phillips — whose wedding and baby were featured in such mags — is on loan from her morning sofa to lend journalistic gravitas.

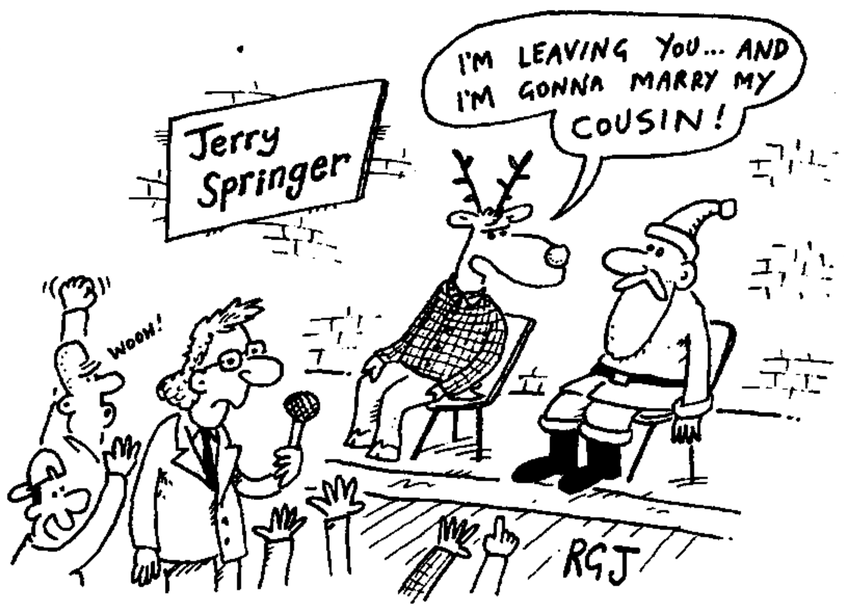
The first edition was fronted by Phillips from Sir Elton John's Barbie Night Aids fund-raiser. It's a measure of the series' desperation to suggest glamour that Phillips was required to stand outside in a sleeveless evening dress on a near-freezing December evening.

The show's big idea is that — to get away from that heavy confrontational stuff which is a risk even on *The Richard And Judy Show* — celebrities will interview other celebrities. Nigel Havers chats to Sharon Stone in LA. "You're the most beautiful actress in Hollywood," he challenges her. Then Patsy Palmer of *EastEnders* quizzes her old mate Matthew Kelly over lunch. "I'm not a big one for eating out," he confides.

The good news for Phillips ought to be that she◊s finally found a format in which, in comparison at least, she looks like a tough interviewer. But she flunks it. Interrogating Victoria Adams Beckham, she suggests: "It's been a hard week for you!" Posh admits that, yes, it has but: "You stood up for me, Fiona." They hug. Revealing that newspaper comment on her wedding soured her honeymoon, Posh suggests that "that would hurt anyone!" But Fiona comes back with a spiky follow-up: "Course it would." "Hey – she's a lovely girl – isn't she?", Fiona analyses when the interview is over.

And so it goes on. If the century's other great inventions had shown the trajectory followed by television, the car would soon have been forced off the road by the horse-and-cart and the early computers rapidly abandoned in favour of the abacus.

'Square Eyes'



Rudolf The Redneck Reindeer

SPLIT personalities

Bob Moore

Cherie Blair Witch

Ian Hislop, Barry Fantoni,
Richard Ingrams and Craig Brown,
will be signing copies of:

The 1999 Private Eye Annual
St Albion Parish News *Book Two*
The Craig Brown Omnibus

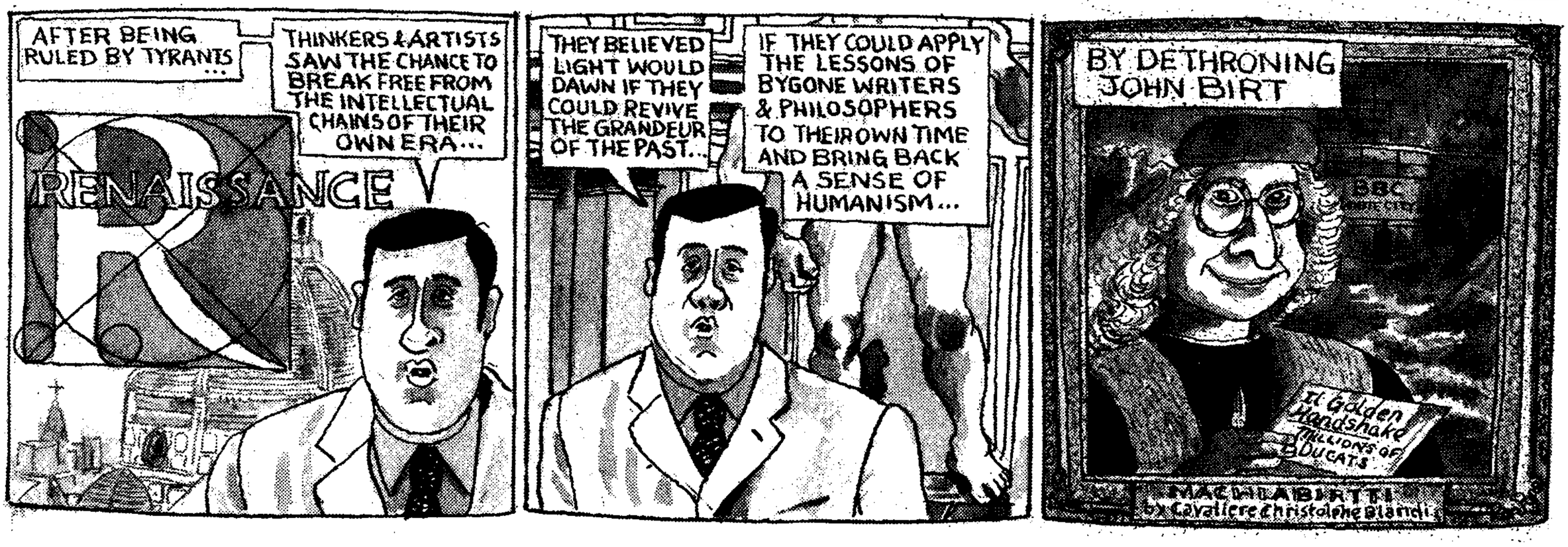
at BOOKS etc.,
60 Fenchurch Street, EC3
on Tuesday 14 December,
12.30pm – 1.30pm
To reserve signed copies contact BOOKS etc. on 0171 481 4425

LUVVIES

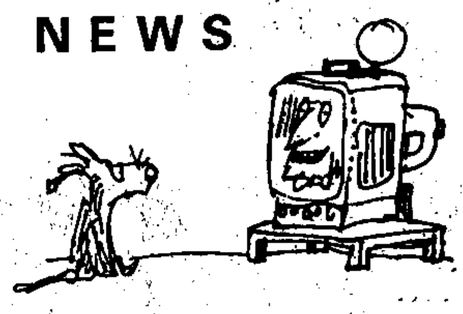
"I think, being an actor, you already have everything inside you. It's like when you have a spot and squeeze it – you see all the blood coming to the surface. That's what being an actor is like. If you press the right parts you can bring the character to the surface. It's whether you can bring it out at the right time."

JONATHAN RHYS-MEYERS
Hot Tickets, Evening Standard

An occasional column devoted to gems from the acting profession. £10 paid for entries.


AFTER BEING RULED BY TYRANTS...
THINKERS & ARTISTS SAW THE CHANCE TO BREAK FREE FROM THE INTELLECTUAL CHAINS OF THEIR OWN ERA...
RENAISSANCE
THEY BELIEVED LIGHT WOULD DAWN IF THEY COULD REVIVE THE GRANDEUR OF THE PAST..
IF THEY COULD APPLY THE LESSONS OF BYGONE WRITERS & PHILOSOPHERS TO THEIR OWN TIME AND BRING BACK A SENSE OF HUMANISM...
BY DETHRONING JOHN BIRT
BBC DIRECTOR
A Golden Handshake MILLIONS OF DUCATS
MACHIAVERTI by Cavaliere Christophe Blandi

MEDIA NEWS



SHORTLY before the merger of Carlton Communications and United News and Media was announced, media chiefs suddenly dropped the original name and acronym for the merged company — Carlton United Newspapers and Television. Why ever did they do that?

UNDER the headline "Talent on Display" ***Ariel*****, the BBC's in-house propaganda rag, announces the latest "celebration" of the Beeb's design department, one of the key departments within BBC Resources.**

"The 'Design Works' exhibition (geddit?!?) is the centre piece of the Vision initiative... to encourage and support new design talent" and plug the sort of BBC expertise that can generate much needed revenue through lucrative commercial deals outside the BBC.

Not on display in the same issue was another design story: the, er, closure of the design department at BBC Resources Wales, announced in a memo to staff on the same day. "In putting together budgets for next year we have not been able to show profitable activity in all areas," it admitted, before not revealing the vast cost of the Resources own management structure that make profits so difficult to realise (see *Eyes passim*).

The cost in jobs this time? Twenty four. Nor will they be the last as this directorate faces the consequences of John Birt's experiment with internal market forces.

MEL SMITH and Griff Rhys Jones were not amused to hear that the Beeb is making a new sitcom, ***The Fatty and Grumpy Show*****, based on the behind-the-scenes lives of two comedians, one fat and one grumpy.**

Some in BBC comedy suspect an element of revenge has gone into the creation of the characters. And Smith and Jones were therefore even less amused when the script of *Fatty and Grumpy* landed on their agent's desk, with the suggestion that they might be quite good casting.

AFTER Fulcrum Productions enjoyed massive ratings with its ITV documentary ***Diana: Secrets Behind the Crash*****, which claimed that Dodi and Di's driver was blinded by a motorcyclist armed with an MI6 flash gun, French judge Hervé Stephan concluded that chauffeur Henri Paul was largely to blame because he was so drunk.**

Other highlights of Fulcrum's back catalogue include a documentary made for Channel Four about the murder of WPC Yvonne Fletcher, who was shot outside the Libyan embassy in 1984. The programme concluded that the bullet that killed Yvonne could not have come from the Libyan embassy, but was fired from a neighbouring building.

Odd that the Libyan authorities accepted full responsibility for Yvonne's death in July and at the end of last month paid her family £250,000 in compensation for her murder.

Plugged In

Test Match cricket sucks you in. Test cricket is a novel rather than a short story and a classic psychological novel rather than a whodunnit. It was plain from the first over how things were going to work out, but what would it do to the people involved?

That is the question that keeps Test cricket going. That is why Sky are so keen on covering it. They not only bring us England's winter Tests, they have signed agreements to cover Test cricket with most of the leading Test-match nations over the coming 12 months.

SIMON BARNES
The Times

Nominated by Gill Darvill.

An occasional column devoted to cross-media plugs masquerading as news.

IT'S GRIM UP NORTH LONDON

KNIFE & PACKER

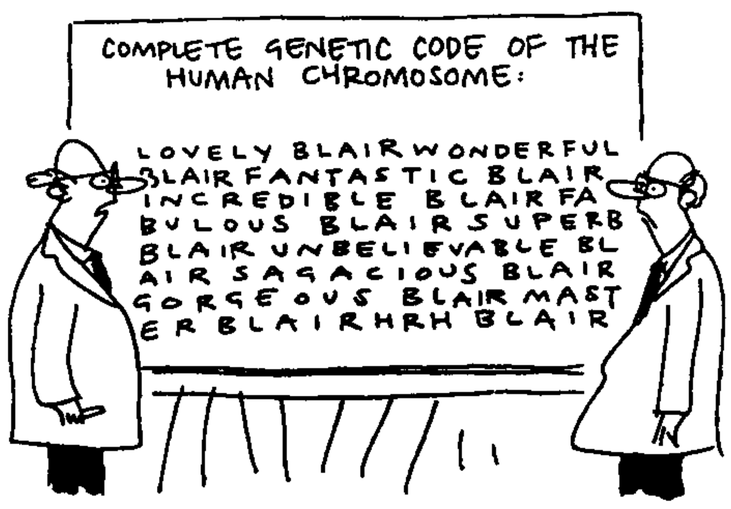
LOOK HOW MAX HAS DECORATED THIS PLACE! IT'S GAUDY, TACKY AND OVERWROUGHT
IT SUMS UP EVERYTHING THAT'S WRONG WITH CHRISTMAS – NORMALLY SOUND DECORATIVE JUDGEMENT LAPSES INTO GROSS VICTORIAN SENTIMENTALITY
HE'S JUST LOST IT
ONE BAUBLE WOULD HAVE SAID IT ALL

JAMES H. REEVE, a former radio presenter on BBC Greater Manchester Radio, has paid a high price for probing the boundaries of political correctness.

In September 1998 he asked a local racial equality campaigner on air if he would ever condone the use of the word "nigger" in an anti-racist context. Later that day he was called before the station's managing editor and asked to explain his gratuitous use of racist language. She refused to accept the word had formed part of a rational debate.

Feeling himself in a Kafkaesque situation, Reeve lost his temper and walked out of the meeting. Ten days later he was told over the phone he would not be asked to return to the station.

Reeve, who is now taking his case before the controller of the regions Andy Griffee, wonders why it was all right for Professor Laurie Taylor to host a discussion of the present-day significance of the word "nigger" on Radio 4 in July, while he lost his job for doing the same last year.


COMPLETE GENETIC CODE OF THE HUMAN CHROMOSOME:
LOVELY BLAIR WONDERFUL BLAIR FANTASTIC BLAIR INCREDIBLE BLAIR FABULOUS BLAIR SUPERB BLAIR UNBELIEVABLE BLAIR SAGACIOUS BLAIR GORGEOUS BLAIR MASTER BLAIR HRH BLAIR

LINGUISTICS

WHILE Ulster's new education minister Martin McGuinness pushes the teaching of Gaelic, loyalists are also doing their bit to promote minority languages.

They have insisted on a tri-lingual policy for the province: English, Gaelic and, er, Scots – the latter being a bizarre mix of Robert Burns, Billy Connolly and *Trainspotting*, which many experts refuse to accept is a genuine language rather than a hard-to-follow (when sober) dialect.

Predictably, well paid experts have emerged arguing that Scots is indeed a proper way to speak. As a result the government must now provide a Scots translation service at Stormont even though none of Ulster's elected politicians appear able to speak Scots. It must also advertise appropriate civil service jobs in fluent *hey-Jimmy*.

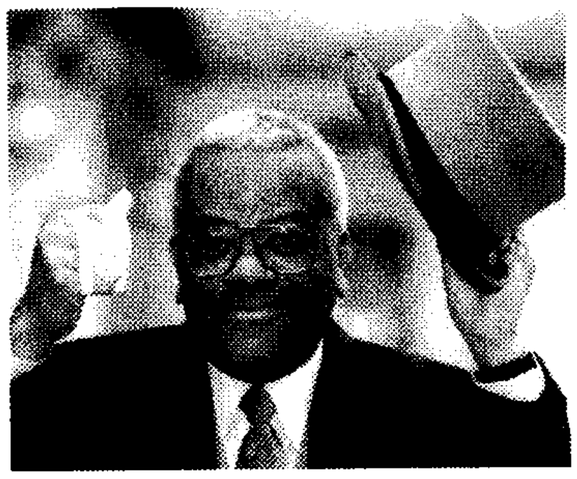
The first such ad has now appeared for an "*Eeksi-Peeksi Skame Heid-Yin*". Connolly fans will recognise the last word, and the official translation is Equality Schemes Manager, *eeksi-peeksi* apparently meaning "equitable".

The Northern Ireland Health and Social Services Central Services Agency is the employer, and "*ti be schuir o makkin guid wir new stator dutie*" — ie to avoid being buried alive by avaricious lawyers — "*the Agency ettils ti tak on a new heid-yin ti owersee the up-settin o an eeksi-peeksi skame.*"

"*We'r luikin for a skeilie heid-yin*" (we need an experienced manager) *wi leir* (educated) *up til degree level at haes skile o eeksi-peeksi quaistens* (who has an interest in equality issues), *an the can to wark* (and the ability to work, or perhaps the ken to Kirsty) *at the heichest laivels...*"

"*Along wi thon* (in addition), *the bodie walit wul hae byous* (the successful candidate will have exceptional) *traffeck* (communication), *infittin* (influencing) *an analietical skiels*." And all for just £32,297 a year plus expenses and allowances.

GONG!



THAT'S TRACEY EMIN ON THE 13th. MARK LAWSON ON THE 17th AND CHRIS SMITH ON THE 20th. AMAZING!
WHAT ARE YOU UP TO, JEZ? CHECKING OUT YOUR CHRISTMAS PARTY DATES?
NO. I'VE NEVER BEEN ABLE TO RESIST TAKING A PEEK BEHIND THE LITTLE WINDOWS
ISLINGTON ADVENT CALENDAR

SIGNAL FAILURES

Focus on Southall

WHILE Railtrack talks about nationwide automatic train protection (ATP) costing £2bn and everyone else talks of it costing £1bn, the Eye can reveal how much Great Western Trains (GWT) aimed to save by not switching on ATP on the train which crashed at Southall in 1997: all of £50.

This puts in perspective the greed of what is widely recognised as one of the most lucrative franchises of all. Its £300m turnover in the year of the Southall crash was buoyed by a £60m subsidy – a huge sum for an InterCity business that is intrinsically self-supporting.

The path to calculation of the £50 saving begins with a report commissioned from Electrowatt Engineering by Railtrack into the ATP system which had been installed on Great Western as one of two pilot projects. The report, delivered in the same month as the Southall crash, confounds the rail industry's suggestions that ATP technology is still unready for widespread application. Electrowatt's basic conclusions were that GWT's ATP worked fairly well but was dogged by GWT treating the equipment as a nuisance and by poor maintenance by Railtrack and GWT.

Electrowatt knew its stuff – and eerily so. Its report, written weeks or days before the ATP-preventable Southall crash, predicted: "In the absence of ATP there is a 26 percent chance of an ATP-preventable accident involving a GWT train in the next 10 years. Continuation with the status quo may also have some political cost, because at present the majority of GWT trains run without ATP and this situation is unlikely to improve in the near future."

GWT's negative attitude to ATP trickled down from the top, notably from safety director Richard George (who broke down in tears at the Southall inquiry and was earlier criticised by an Old Bailey judge for not turning up at his company's trial). According to evidence heard by the Southall inquiry, George declared at a meeting with Railtrack in January 1997 that a £350,000 modification to the trains' ATP antennae would be the last major modification programme and that GWT would agree to no further capital expenditure. (This modification was deemed necessary in November 1996 but it was not until after the Southall crash that GWT belatedly ordered the equipment.)

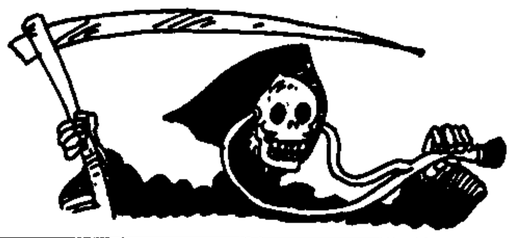
George – who personally made £3m from the sale of GWT to bus company First Group – privately regarded ATP as "a bottomless pit", but Electrowatt calculated the cost of the remaining work needed on GWT's system at £965,000 – offset by a forecast saving of £207,000 from the accidents it would prevent.

Lower in GWT's chain of command there was general apathy towards ensuring ATP was up and running whenever reasonably possible. Drivers were under strict orders not to switch on the equipment at intermediate stops, as the train would have to stand for four minutes while the ATP system ran tests on itself.

When the 10.32 from Swansea to Paddington arrived at Cardiff on 19 September 1997, the train's ATP, unlike its basic automatic warning system (AWS), was in working order. But the ATP was switched off because its driver was not trained to use it. He was replaced at Cardiff by Larry Harrison, who *was* ATP-trained but was not allowed to switch on the device at an intermediate stop. So he took a 125mph express out of Cardiff with neither the ATP nor the AWS in use.

The 10.32 was scheduled to stop three minutes at Cardiff; waiting for the ATP to boot up would have delayed the train by about one minute. Electrowatt's report puts the cost to GWT of train delays at £50 per minute. So a company accustomed to losing hours every week in delays had managed to save one minute and £50 – at the expense of seven deaths, injuries to 150 others, written-off rolling stock and damaging publicity for the entire rail industry.

'Dr B. Ching'



DOING THE ROUNDS

A survey of 54 specialist registrars (the new grade of junior doctor) does not bode well for the NHS. The doctors, from the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary, were asked if the hours they worked and training they received were adequate to prepare them for consultant posts. Overall 65 percent said no, with a staggering 93 percent of surgeons claiming that even if their training were improved the time they spent in each post would still be inadequate.

The fear is that newly qualified consultants will not be competent to manage a wide range of illnesses and procedures without supervision, but will have to "have a go" as the job demands. A case of "Trust me... even though I've never done this before."

One patient-safe solution could be to have two grades of consultant (junior and senior), with one supervising the other. But this would require a vast expansion in consultant numbers. This vision of a "consultant-led" service has been promised by successive governments, but the department of health has never acted to force hospitals to recruit more consultants when they opt for the cheaper alternatives of staff grade posts and associate specialists.

Health secretary Alan Milburn has at least committed the government to more consultants for heart surgery – a very media-friendly speciality – but elsewhere the number of specialist registrars is being cut. The NTN (National Training Number) for paediatrics is down by 100, A&E is down 75, anaesthetics is down 50, and obstetrics and gynaecology down 35. The reason behind the reductions is that there is little point training junior doctors if there are no consultant posts for them to go to.

● IN JULY 1998 Forth Valley Primary Care trust suspended its chief executive Derek Pollacchi amid claims that he and other managers had awarded themselves unwarranted salary increases.

An internal inquiry discovered "confusing, inaccurate and misleading" remuneration committee reports, and made 14 points about its workings. But after consultation with Scottish health service advisers, it has felt "unable to put these matters in the public domain" despite a prior commitment to do so. This follows the collapse of an internal disciplinary hearing into Mr Pollacchi's conduct after he withdrew through ill health. The trust has now assured everyone it has accepted and acted on the secret recommendations. Mr Pollacchi has retired with a pension.

● THE British Association of Surgical Oncology (BASO) has discovered that a third of breast cancers are detected in women who are referred to hospital as non-urgent cases. Unfortunately the wait for such non-urgent appointments has soared from six weeks to 14-18 weeks. The reason, ironically, is the government's April promise that all referrals to cancer clinics should happen within a fortnight. As BASO executive member and Chelmsford consultant Paul Sauven said: "The number of inappropriate GP referrals has risen by 20-40 percent... Clinics without extra resources or staff are being swamped by women referred 'urgently' who do not have cancer and who have been sent by GPs simply wanting to cover themselves or placate a patient... There is no biological reason whatsoever about the two-week rule."

● SOUTH Wales Ambulance Service Ltd (**not** South West, as stated in *Eye* 990) wishes to stress it is a reputable private ambulance service and not "the operator in the Swansea area" who "has 34 criminal charges to his name" (*Eye* 986).

M.D.

DOWN ON THE FARM

WORRIED faces at the headquarters of Eville and Jones, which from its office in Leeds recruits scores of Spanish and other foreign vets to enforce European union (EU) hygiene directives on Britain's meat industry.

What has alarmed the two former Chesterfield vets who run the company is a decision by the European court of justice (ECJ) that it is illegal to make profits out of meat inspection. The reason the firm has been enjoying bumper business in recent years is that, under the new continental system of meat inspection, meat plants have to pay for their meat inspectors to be supervised by "official veterinary surgeons". But the government's notoriously inefficient meat hygiene service has nothing like enough vets of its own to operate the new system. This is where Eville and Jones spotted a highly lucrative business opportunity, in recruiting foreign vets via the internet and contracting them out to the government agency.

It has long been a scandal to the meat industry just how useless most of these new Spanish, French, Italian and other foreign vets are. Many are young, female and can scarcely speak English. They are given virtually no training in the complexities of hygiene law. They are given enormous powers, which some use quite shamelessly. Yet firms have to pay for their services at between £22 and £120 an hour, a cost which many businesses find crippling.

What has only recently come to light is how lucrative that business opportunity spotted by Eville and Jones has turned out to be. Firstly it emerged that the meat hygiene service was only receiving around £8 an hour for these contract vets. Then it emerged that most foreign vets were themselves only being paid between £8 and £12 an hour, meaning that the rest of the average £40-an-hour fee was going to Eville and Jones in profit. One trade estimate is that the company's gross profit last year could not have been less than £2m.

But now, in a case involving a German firm, comes the bombshell ECJ ruling that firms can only be charged for meat inspection at its actual cost. Where does this leave Eville and Jones, with its £2m-plus a year profits? And where might it leave the British meat industry, currently so hard-hit by soaring inspection costs that, according to a recent Soil Association survey, more than two thirds of the few hundred firms which remain fear they will not long survive?

'Even Newer Muckspreader'

Down on the Fish Farm

THE more food farm salmon eat, the quicker they grow to slaughter-weight. Their diet reflects this commercial necessity of course – but salmon do have to be able to see their food before they can eat it. Because of stocking densities in the cages where they spend their brief lives, swimming in their own excrement, many develop eye defects such as cataracts.

To overcome this "problem" tests are being carried out using titanium dioxide coated mica chips in farm fish food. This substance is widely used in the paint and paper making industries to enhance the whiteness of products. Presumably it is hoped that semi-blind farm salmon might see "whitened" food pellets more readily and gobble them up.

However, farm fish diet often has a high fat and oil content and this causes captive salmon further problems. They cannot metabolise all the fat and oil and must get rid of it somehow. They do so by vomiting and excessive belching. The surface in some cages often resembles a pan of boiling water.

Tidal currents move this cloud of shit round the Scottish sea lochs that house the fish farms. Some of this pollution ends up on adjacent beaches and harbour piers. A scum-line of fat was reported recently on beaches on an island to the east of Skye (*Eye* 990). A new report alleges that a pier on a sea loch in Skye is covered with "slime" that could have come from a nearby fish farm. The Scottish environment pollution agency is investigating.

Most worrying is the possibility that this mobile sink of pollution could be linked to the persistence of the amnesic shellfish poisoning (ASP) outbreak. Now entering its sixth month, it has closed down more than 11,000 square miles of Scottish coastal waters to scallop fishing (*Eye* 981/987). It may also explain why test results vary widely, week to week. Do wind and tide move fish farm waste in and out of affected areas?

'Old Trout'

Haddock bids for NFU leadership

Western Morning News

ROTTEN BOROUGHS

QUAYLE'S NEST EGG

PART of cash-strapped Durham's grandiose plans for the celebration of the millennium is the making of a *20-minute* film telling the history of the city over the past 1,000 years.

This will be no home movie. Production costs are estimated at £690,000 and it will require a £386,000 "large format" projection system — aka IMAX — to be installed in the new Millennium City's visitor centre (see *Eye* 985).

The project is the baby of Colin Shearsmith, Durham city council's chief executive (whose recent discussion with Inspector Knacker in connection with another matter was reported in *Eye* 990). In February 1998 the council sent a letter appointing Brendan Quayle, a freelance television producer who has worked with TV naturalist David Bellamy, as "film producer" to the Millennium City project. It gave him authority to carry out items of "pre-production" work on the project. This was handy, as Quayle had already started work, having submitted invoices worth a total of £28,908.39 between September and December 1997. These were all addressed personally to Shearsmith, who was then assistant chief executive.

Film-makers in the north-east and elsewhere who may be puzzled why a £1m-plus project has gone to a relatively unknown film-maker without any competitive tendering exercise having taken place should bear in mind one extraordinary coincidence. Brendan Quayle is a close friend and tennis partner of Durham's chief executive, Colin Shearsmith.

● **DURHAM's head of recreation services Keith Walton, a former Commonwealth Games bronze medal-winning swimmer, resigned last week after nine hours of videotapes featuring a top council official and four different women engaged in out-of-hours "romps" in council offices were found in his locker. If only they had got Walton to make the millennium film, say cynics, the city could have saved itself a million quid!**

RABBATTS YOUR LOT

SO FAREWELL, then, Heather Rabbatts, Britain's highest paid local authority chief executive, who as boss of Lambeth took on what was described as "the worst job in local government" — and failed.

Three months after her appointment in April 1995, *Eye* 875 reported Rabbatts' goal of improving Lambeth: staff would see a difference in three months and the people "out there" within six months. More than four years on, people certainly have seen a difference, but not in the way she intended.

Many staff have lost their jobs as services have been taken over by private firms, notably TeamLambeth (security) and Capita (benefits). Rabbatt's Blairy "big idea" was that private firms would deliver better services than in-house staff ever could. Whoops!

On 30 November, the day she quit, Lambeth's citizen's charter results were published spelling out the extent of her failure. Highlights of Lambeth's performance under her reign, according to the council's own figures, include the percentage of claims for housing benefit from council tenants processed within the 14 day statutory time limit — a pathetic 46 percent in 1996/97, and an even more pathetic, 33.8 percent in 1998/99. The processing of council tax benefit claims within 14 days fell from 47 percent in 1996/97 to 27.24 per cent in 1998/99.

Lambeth maintained its position as the worst collector of council tax in the country, scraping in just 80.30 percent. Refuse collection fared little better, with the net cost per household having risen from £37.08 to £45.41 in the same period. Total council rent arrears now stand at £40m, and Lambeth owes the banks a total of £850m — a debt greater than that of Guatemala.

With Rabbatts working out her notice, attention has turned to her likely successor. Hot favourite is Lambeth's director of housing John Broomfield, who besides tucking his tie into his trousers is looking for another job following the decision to "give away" the council's 40,000 council properties, which will leave him without a directorate to manage. The decision follows the admission that Lambeth can't afford to carry out much needed repairs on the council's dilapidated housing stock.

Plus ça change...

STARVATION, 1999

CHILDREN are not the only victims of Lambeth's pisspoor social services department. The elderly are suffering appalling neglect too.

An inquest at Southwark coroner's court has recorded the death of 74-year-old Violet Hardy as due to "lack of nutrition" – aka starvation. Incredibly, although the pensioner was visited weekly in her home by social services staff, they failed to notice that Mrs Hardy had lost so much weight she weighed only two stone at the time of her death.

Lambeth council's press office says the council was not responsible for her death as staff were only employed to cash her pension and make sure she had some clean clothes to wear. Were they blind?

Why social services staff did not inform either their bosses, Mrs Hardy's GP or the local healthcare trust that the pensioner was wasting away remains a mystery. Mrs Hardy's family intends to take legal action against Lambeth, so the council will have an opportunity to explain from the witness stand just how it was that it was not negligent.

BOLSHIE BALLET

WHEN Cherie Blair hosted a fund-raising dinner for Museums on Merseyside at Lord Rothschild's pad in St James Place recently, she let slip that whenever she mentions her home city of Liverpool to her husband, Saint Tony exclaims: "Oh! That Bolshie place!"

Moves are well underway to ensure the last of the old bolshies are removed before Liverpool becomes the first provincial city to follow London's example and get an elected mayor.

Liverpool's existing lord mayor Joe Devaney has already been deprived of his right to stand again as a Labour candidate in council elections. The *Eye*'s prediction (988) that his seat would be given to "Cosy" Rosie Cooper as her reward for defecting from the Lib Dems has been officially confirmed.

KISS ME KEIGHT

MEANWHILE in neighbouring Knowsley council leader and "president for life" Jim Keight has been trying to settle old scores now that he claims his regime has had a clean bill of health from Millbank.

First to go was mayor John King whose crime was to vote against a council land sale. Another victim was Mike Murphy, agent for home office minister George Howarth. Murphy's offence was to vote against the Keight whip four years ago.

The person who presided over the selection panel to determine their suitability was Keight's hatchet man, Cllr Mike Cairns. He is such a good judge of councillors' suitability that he provided a character reference for another Knowsley councillor convicted of indecently assaulting a 12-year-old girl two years ago (*Eye* 930).

Sadly the deselections proved too much for Labour's local government enforcer Howard Knight. King and Murphy have since been reinstated by the north-west regional office on his orders.

● **DARRYL STEPHENSON, bumptious chief exec of East Riding of Yorkshire council (aka "the barrow boy from Hull") was furious when *Eye* 982 reported his sale-behind-closed-doors of the charming town of Beverley's ancient cattle market to Tesco, which wants to build a huge supermarket on the site. Darryl has vented his anger on hacks closer to home by telling the *Hull Daily Mail* that East Riding council is taking its advertising elsewhere until the paper provides more toadying coverage.**

Pseuds Corner

FERRY-SWAINSON – To Kate, Richard and Matilda, a beautiful and cherished daughter and baby sister, Delilah Velvet, born on 22nd October in to her Daddy's hands. We are all deeply in love. Thanks and love to Jane Westbrook.

The Times

The fighters might be strong and admirable men, full of all kinds of good qualities, but boxing cannot be anything but boxing, and its natural habitat is not the ripple and run of the pelagic waters but the benthic depths of the ocean, a world of murk that is sustained by the ordure that falls from above.

SIMON BARNES
The Times

So he [Jonathan Raban] wasn't long out of the Seattle Ship Canal, his Swedish 35ft ketch cutting the waves with graceful ease, before his shore life was consigned to the hold of his memory and his thoughts unfurled like a net with which he fished for meaning in the vastness around him.

ANTHONY SATTIN
Sunday Times

The more I use colour as a tool, the more I get intoxicated by it. I can understand why Mark Rothko slashed his throat in front of his last painting.

ES DEVLIN
The Guardian

84 MARK WALLINGER (B. 1959) HYMN
digital print. looped video projection edition of 10; 8/10 digital beta. 1997. ESTIMATE: £3,5000-5,000

A blind man is on top of Primrose Hill with all London laid out behind him. He is standing on a box holding a balloon filled with helium gas which bears a picture of himself as a young boy. He sings a traditional hymn: "There's a place for little children" pausing only to breathe in helium from a cylinder which stands next to him, which gives his voice a high-pitched childish tone. The effect is both funny and sinister. By the time the balloon is released into the air the candied version of Heaven offered children has been suffocated beneath the weight of moral opprobrium and Mark Wallinger is no longer innocent.

Christie's auction catalogue

Performance may occupy a space of no referents and has no simulationist tendencies, the newness and the unknowingness of what we might see has then, I think, a knack of often unwittingly accessing the real.

CHRIS SHORT
Flyer discussion of "Art Surgery" project, Newlyn Gallery, Penzance

Franc Chamberlain "Running"
The longer the experience the stronger its impact. For instance, if you open a door once and go in and out, it's nothing. If you open a door and go in and out for three hours, then the door becomes something else. It's no longer just a door. A phrase that's found its way into my journal illustrates the experience: 'By reducing the body's options, the mind is freed and manifests its life, its vital force through the available body'. This process of reduction created a lightness and a spatial vacuum that could be poured full of the commitment to one single act.

MARINA ABRAMOVIC
University of Wolverhampton arts programme

CONTRIBUTORS: Gillian Anteney-Hoare, Harry Ogle, Paul Bacon, Deirdre O'Brien, Julie Robinson, Alice Gaskell, D. Holloway.

£10 paid for entries

Letters

Mayor culpa

Sir,

Your "Archer Quits" cover was so pathetically inoffensive that I am thinking of cancelling my subscription.

Yours sincerely,
DAVID CAMPBELL,

Cardiff.

PS: Congratulations on your "corporate welfare" column. There is a huge seam of similar stories to be exposed.

Sir,

The Blair Baby Shock photo buried at page 5 inside your latest organ ("I don't know how it leaked out") was both offensive and funny and would therefore have made a classic Eye cover. Instead you treated us to the predictable, not to say pisspoor, Jeffrey Archer cover. What's the problem? Bottled out? Or just couldn't resist a gloat at the wretched Archer?

Yours,
MICK HARTLEY,

Via e-mail.

Sir,

Today's cover looks great (Pearly Lord Archer) but my Dad thinks the caption should be "Maybe it's because I'm a blunderer".

Yours faithfully,
UNA McCARTAN,

Brighton.

Lookalike

Archole

Enfield

Sir,

I have noticed the similarity between those two great impressionists Jeffrey Archer and Harry Enfield. Jeffrey's jolly cockney looks rather similar to Harry's annoying "You don't want to do that" character. Obviously Jeffrey should have taken some of that advice!

PETER CHADBURN,

Via e-mail.

Toadying the line

Sir,

It is, of course, a great honour to have your award for journalistic toadying to the government named after me (Eye, 26 November). Modesty demands, however, an admission that I am incompetent, even as a sycophant. Several times this year, when the batteries on my bleeper ran out unnoticed, I have found myself inadvertently at odds with immigration, arms sales, the replacement of the Lords, fox-hunting, the legalisation of hard and soft drugs and one or two more.

Given this, I am glad that you judge that my lickspittle belief that Ken Livingstone is not somehow the answer to London's problems, nevertheless qualifies me for the lapidary distinction that you propose. How freethinking of you.

Yours ever
DAVID AARONOVITCH,

London.

Vet on call

Sir,

Gumboot (Eye 989) uses his journalistic talents to tell only part of the story when he accuses the veterinary profession of being a "useless bunch of greedy drug-peddlers".

While the annual turnover per vet in large animal practice may indeed by £130,000, he fails to explain that the figure includes such minor items as: the cost of drugs purchased to sell on the farms, the cost of equipping and staffing the practice and that of providing a genuine 24 hour emergency service. In my own practice, my average working week is 49 hours with an additional 56 hours on call and available for work. Having spent seven years at university (partly at my own cost) to achieve the luxury of a 105-hour working week, some might argue that I deserve a professional salary for the professional service I offer.

As to the accusation that we "actively promote drug use", I spend a good deal of my time collecting diagnostic samples to be able to advise clients on methods of preventing infectious disease by vaccination or husbandry improvements, rather than being forced to treat any disease when it occurs.

Yours faithfully,
MARK SPURDENS,

Ellesmere, Shropshire

E-male

Sir,

Although your cartoon in Eye 990 showing Shylock the moneylender demanding a pound of flesh as payment for an e-commerce deal is witty, I hope you will forgive my pedantry in pointing out that your caption reading "The E-Merchant of Venice" is inaccurate as, in the Shakespeare play, the Merchant of Venice is the character called Antonio, a pound of whose flesh Shylock demands when Antonio does not cough up. Shylock is not himself the character known as the Merchant of Venice. Not everyone knows this.

Yours in usurious
academic accuracy,
ROGER SIMPSON,

Via e-mail.

Right tits

Sir,

I agree totally about the dumbing down of TV science. Unfortunately, you then join in by talking about "silicon breast implants". Silicon is a solid which is almost as hard as quartz, but "silicone" is a generic name for a series of polymers including silicon-oxygen bonds. Depending on the structure, silicones may be used as greases, sealants, coatings and soft rubber-like compounds. The flexible rubbery silicones are used as breast implants. Although they are firmer than the surrounding tissue, they are not rock hard like silicon.

Yours,
KEVIN THURLOW,

Redhill.

LOOKALIKE

What an amazingly pathetic way to make a living...

What A Pathetic Way To Make A Living

Sir

We act for Biro Bic L of the Trade Mark "Biro and some sixty other cou

Our Client's attentio report entitled "Curren September edition of yo word "biro" appears to general term for a ballp advised that they must any possible infringem "biro" and to request appropriate, in order t Mark.

Accordingly, we d matter on behalf of ou grateful if you would "Biro" is a Trade Ma connection with ball for pens sold by our so used it should nor capital.

Yours faithfully,
BROOKES & BRIDGE
(Solicitors),

Gray's Inn, London WC1.

P.E. Oct. 27 '89

Sir,

We act for Biro Bic Limited who are the owners of the Trade Mark "Biro" in the United Kingdom and some sixty other countries.

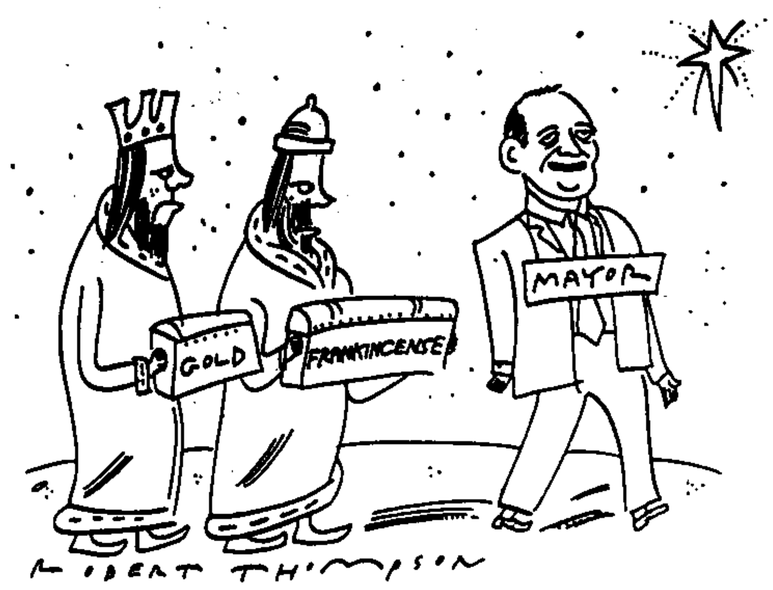
Our client's attention has been drawn to an article entitled "The Gnome World English Dictionary" in your issue for 3 September 1999 in which the word "biro" is used as a general term for a ballpen. Our clients have been advised that they must be alert to draw attention to any possible infringement or misuse of the word "Biro" and to request correction where appropriate, in order to preserve the value of their Mark.

Accordingly, we draw your attention to the matter on behalf of our clients... [The rest of this letter has been cut on the grounds that it is far too boring to reproduce in full. Ed.]

Yours faithfully,
PETTMAN SMITH SOLICITORS,

London SW1.

P.E. Nov. 26 '99



"Ken never misses an opportunity for a bit of publicity"

Barking

Sir,

Piloti reports the efforts of Jilly Cooper, Andrew Parker-Bowles et al to erect a War Memorial in part of the City of Westminster. Why do we need another one when in Cambridge Avenue, London NW6, there is already an excellent memorial attached to the RSPCA clinic?

Incidentally, the Animals War Memorial Hospital is located on the northern borders of the City of Westminster.

Yours sincerely,
TIM WALKER,

London.

Doing the Lambeth work

Sir,

Re: "Capita Punishment". In your Rotten Boroughs column, Eye 990, you claim that the computer system that runs Lambeth council's housing benefits service is being replaced because it is not Y2K compliant. It is, rather, your informant's facts that are "in a state of chaos". Let me try and help:
Fact: The current system has been verified as Y2K compliant by the external software supplier, Sema.

Fact: Within the contract that Capita was originally awarded by Lambeth council in December 1997, we stated that the system in place at that time would need to be replaced by March 2000, as beyond that time it would not be supported by the council's external software supplier.

Fact: It is therefore not a "cock-up", but part of a planned upgrade of the systems and services inherited by Capita. Some of the work is indeed being undertaken over the Christmas and millennium holidays — specifically in order to minimise disruption to the service and therefore to Lambeth residents.

Fact: Due to the stronger processes and clear separation of duties that both the council and Capita have put in place, the potential for benefit fraud emanating within the council has been eradicated — a recent independent audit confirms this.
Both the council and Capita are focused on ensuring that the historic failing service Capita inherited is transformed into a robust service for the benefit of the community in Lambeth. Major improvements have been made to date and a detailed plan of further initiatives, including this one, will achieve this.

Yours faithfully,
RM ALDRIDGE,

Executive Chairman, Capita.

Leaflets on the line

Sir,

I wish you'd get these bleedin' stories right.

I was expelled from the Twickenham Conservative Association in 1995 (I joined in 1994). Apparently I was expelled because I organised a public meeting and argued for the removal of John Major as party leader. I concluded that I should be leader of the party.

I pulled out of the 1997 general election campaign because the Royal Mail refused to deliver my election leaflets. The leaflets were deemed to be obscene.

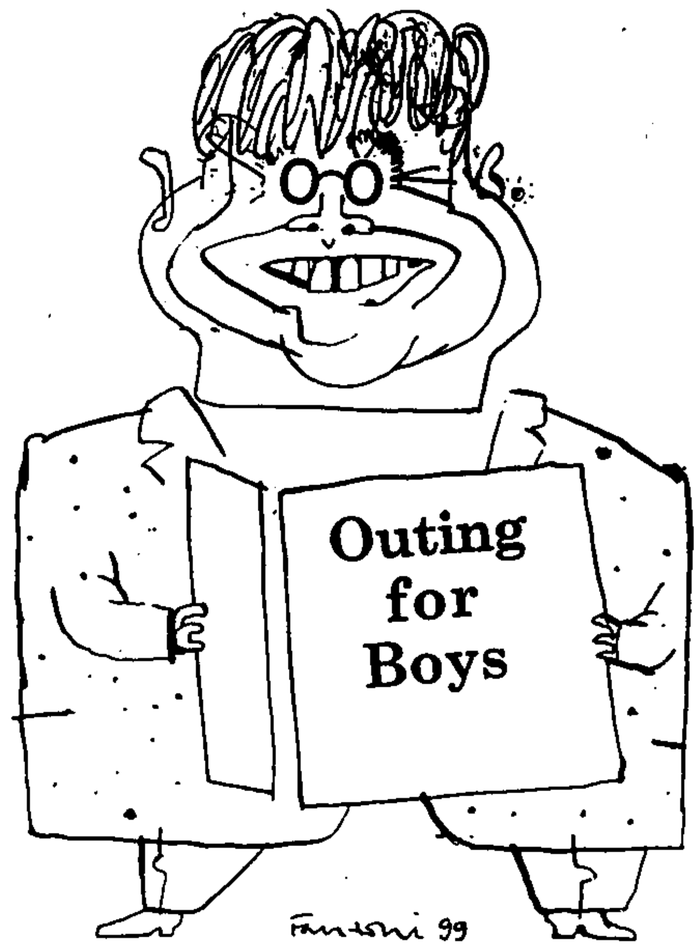
Good evening,
DAVID WILLIAM GRIFFITHS,

Via e-mail.

I-SPY

Suntec News, Singapore

Submitted by Richard Burridge. £10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs. No transparencies.)*

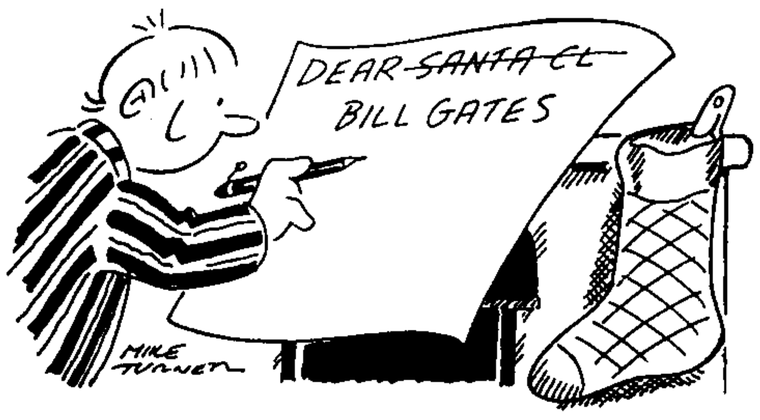


LUVVIES

"Relationships are difficult. It's life. You love life, so you fight. You fight because you love. Otherwise you wouldn't fight. You work. You don't want to die. Why life is a fight, I don't know, but gosh! it is."

SOPHIE MARCEAU (Bond Girl)
Sunday Times Magazine

An occasional column devoted to gems from the acting profession. £10 paid for entries.



Alma Meta

Sir,

In his letter in Eye 990, Tim Parker suggests that the Cambridge Meta Society is but a hilarious student jape. O, that this were so. A look at their website (http://linux.clare.cam.ac.uk/~meta/reviews.htm) reveals the alarming truth that it is the society's members, not myself, who have no sense of irony. It's still funnier than Footlights these days, though.

Yours in anonymity,
ED WILD,

Christ's College, Cambridge.

Phil harmonic

Sir,

A propos evidence of a sense of humour at Buck House (Court & Circular, Eye 989). A few years ago I was favoured with an invitation to a garden party at that venue. As Brenda and Phil processed down the lawn shaking hands with a selected few, they struck up with the tune of "Bow, bow ye lower middle classes" from Iolanthe.

Yours deferentially,
BOB HEYS,

Halifax.

Butchering the language

Sir,

I don't know what effect it may have on British beef exports to France, but I'm going to add insult to pedantry by correcting Iain McDougall's correction (Eye 990) of Mike Barfield's cartoon. The strip should not have been headed either Boucherie Nouveau or Boucherie Nouvelle; the reason being that nouveau (and therefore nouvelle) is one of the few (but commonly-used) adjectives which precede the noun they qualify. The correct title should have been Nouvelle Boucherie.

Apologies for being such a pompous git.

Yours,
ANDREW DAVISON,

Dublin.

Sir,

So the anti-French mob at Windsor and Maidenhead Council have had their promotional leaflets printed by Imprimerie Atlantique of Moutiers-les-Mauxfaits (Rotten Boroughs, Eye 990)? My schoolboy French might be letting me down here, but doesn't Moutiers-les-Mauxfaits translate roughly as "Suffering Sheep Farmers"?

Regards,
MIKE WILSON,

Via e-mail.

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

"I was alone up front, with Danny Murphy playing between me, myself and the midfield."
MICHAEL OWEN, BBC1
(Thomas Bubendorfer)

"All the cul-de-sacs are closed for Scotland..."
JOE JORDAN, ITV
(Rustam Al-Shahi)

"The offer represents a 20% increase on Vodafone's initial bid, but Vodafone may still be facing rejection as hostile takeovers are practically unknown in Germany."
Radio 4
(John Thornton)

"Dean Headley has left the field with a back injury... more news on that as soon as it breaks."
PAT MURPHY, Radio 5
(M. Todd)

Antiques Roadshow Expert: *This bronze of a rider on a horse is stamped 'Made in Germany' – where did you get it?*
Glaswegian Owner: *It came from Torkee.*
Expert: *Oh, Germany has many connections with Turkey.*
Owner: *It was bought in Torquay.*
BBC1
(Jack W. Buss)

Our Friends in the East...

Sir,

I fear you have been the victim of a cruel hoax. The letter in your last issue, signed "Nury Vittachi" about the South China Morning Post cannot be from the celebrated Hong Kong journalist and wit of the same name.

While the letter writer finds it astonishing that I stood up for press freedom, the real Mr Vittachi wrote to me this year "to stress that you and the SCMP have done a great job fighting for press freedom". Another letter from him to me said the Post was looking "fabulous".

My remark about coverage of critics of Beijing in the Hong Kong press which the letter cites, made a simple general point: in a free society, papers follow their own line. You may not approve of it, but you have to give them that liberty if you believe in press freedom.

At the Post, I made sure pro-democracy views critical of Beijing were fully covered: the most reported politician at the time was Emily Lau, the pro-democracy figure who hardly figures in the Jiang Zemin fan club.

The fake Vittachi then mentions a jibe from Martin Lee, the Democrat leader in Hong Kong. The real Vittachi would know that this dates from 1997 not "recently" as the letter puts it. Mr Lee says it was one of those quips politicians deliver for effect, not a real reflection of his views.

What Mr Lee said was that the bridge column was the only independent and interesting thing in the Post. This meant condemning columns by three leading pro-democrats and a 1,200-word article on handover day from a certain Martin Lee, not to mention Mr Vittachi's own writings. A year later, Mr Lee sent me an election poster inscribed "Thank you for your defence of press freedom in Hong Kong! Yours democratically, Martin." I rest my case.

Yours sincerely,
JONATHAN FENBY,

Hong Kong

Sir,

Regarding the scrap between South China Morning Post rejects Funboy Fenby and Nury "Brown Tongue" Vittachi (I employ their usual sobriquets as used here in Hong Kong) I think you may be under the illusion that one is worse than the other.

Readers of the well-established and widely recognised web site NOT THE SOUTH CHINA MORNING POST (http://home.netvigator.com/~adamspub/index) know different.

Our web site has catalogued with great detail and unflinching accuracy the arslikhan tendencies of both Fenby and Vittachi for two and a half years. You are referred to our site search engine for confirmation. Just enter either of their names for reams of irate e-mails from both gentlemen denying their accommodations to the Butchers of Peking are anything but "coverage" and "good journalism".

DR GEORGE ADAMS.
Editor, NOT THE SOUTH CHINA MORNING POST.

HOM SAP

AUSTIN

FUNNY OLD WORLD

COMPILED BY VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH

● **"Surely there must be something more positive that the council could promote about Snowtown" complained Lynette Nitschke, President of the Australian Homicide Victim Support Group, to reporters. "I know that every town needs to cash in on what it's famous for, but don't they realise that many people find this merchandise thoroughly insensitive?"**

Nitschke was objecting to a range of official mementos and souvenirs which went on sale in the South Australian town of Snowtown, shortly after one of Australia's most bizarre and grisly crimes had been uncovered there. "In May, eight dismembered bodies were found in plastic barrels in a disused bank vault. It was a horrific scene, and I should know. I had to comfort some of the bereaved relatives, but Snowtowners seem to think the whole thing was funny, and now they're selling jokey souvenirs. Look at this fridge magnet, with a picture of eight plastic barrels on the front and the caption 'Snowtown SA – you'll have a barrel of fun'. Or this one, of a dismembered man in a barrel saying 'I've been to Snowtown'. You can even buy a barrel-shaped mug, with a spoon in it shaped like a severed arm, and the 'Snowtown Snow Shaker' with bits of body floating about a hillside scene, instead of snow, is just sick. Sorry, but I don't think the council should be raising money in this way."

Attorney-General Trevor Griffin has also complained about the merchandise. Not because of its tastelessness, but because some of the drawings might prejudice a fair trial for the four men accused of the murders. *(The Courier-Mail [Brisbane], 7/10/99. Spotter: Norm Reynolds)*

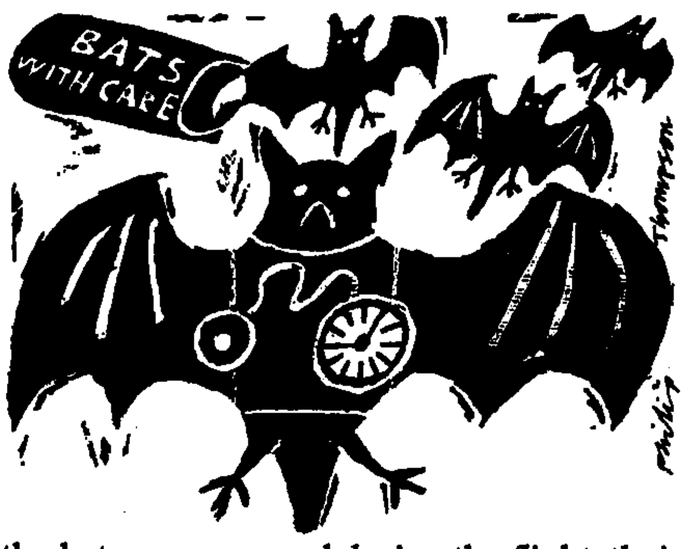
— ● —

● "I know it sounds crazy, but those guys meant business," said Richard Scott-Child of the Australian Museum in Sydney. "During WWII, American scientists really thought they could destroy entire Japanese cities with bat bombs, and they very nearly went into full production."

Scott-Child was speaking at a press conference where he displayed the museum's latest exhibit: the first replica of the ill-fated bat bomb to be built since the end of WWII.

"The theory was simple. You take a Mexican free-tail bat and strap a small napalm-filled vest to its chest, along with a tiny detonator and timer. Then you fill a canister with about three hundred of these bats, and release it while flying over a Japanese city. The canister is designed to disintegrate at 500 metres, allowing the bats to fly out. Because bats hate daylight, they'll all disappear into cracks and crevices of the buildings below, then explode after half an hour. At that time, most Japanese buildings were wooden, so they would all catch fire.

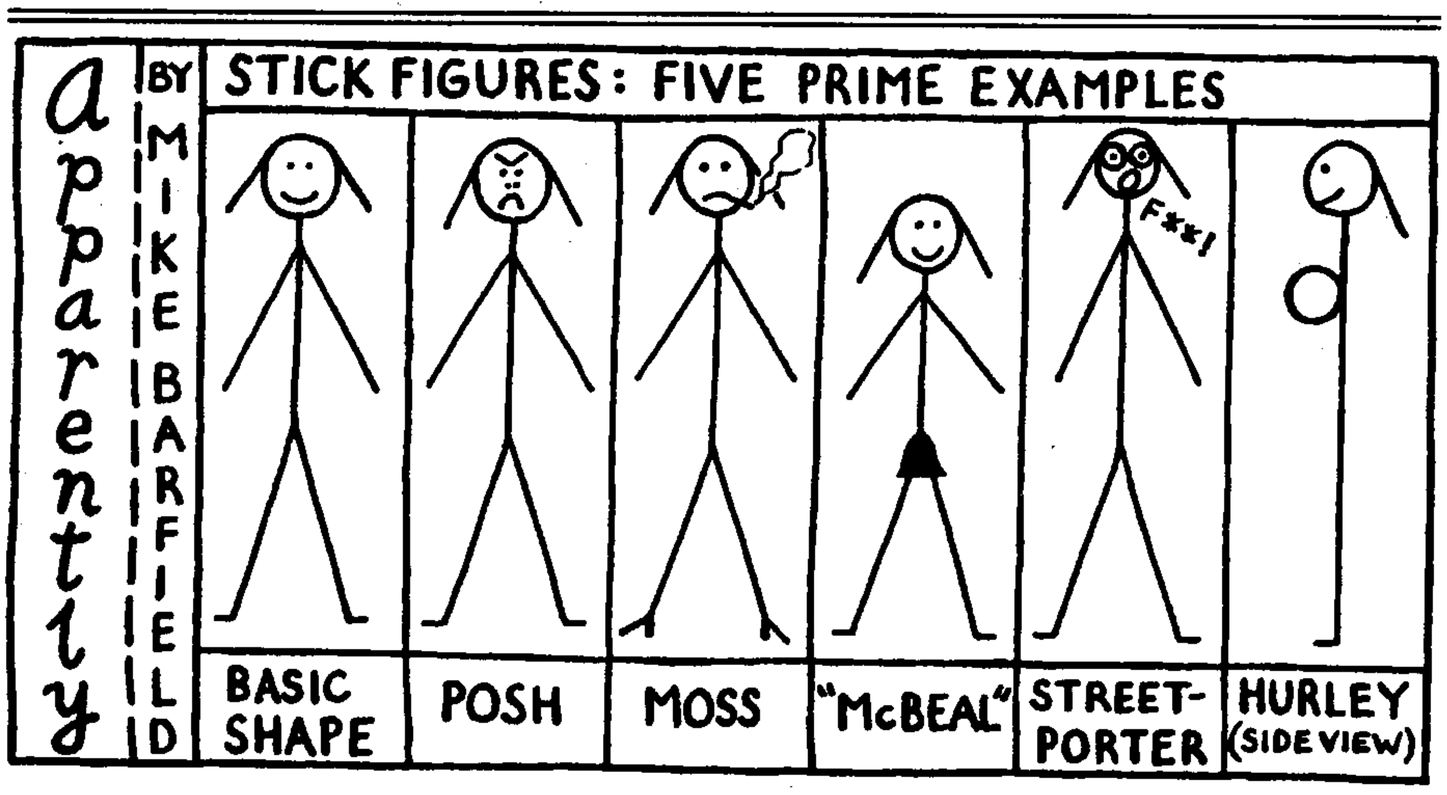
"US scientists experimented with these bat bombs in the early 1940s in the New Mexico desert, but there were problems. During one test, the wind changed and blew the bats back into the US army's headquarters, burning them to the ground. In another incident, some of the bats hid under the car of a high-ranking US officer, causing it to explode. But the tests went on until 1944, when pilots realised that, if one of



the bats ever escaped during the flight, their plane would catch fire. After that, they refused to fly in any more tests, and the project was cancelled." *(New Straits Times, 29/9/99. Spotter: J. Suffolk)*

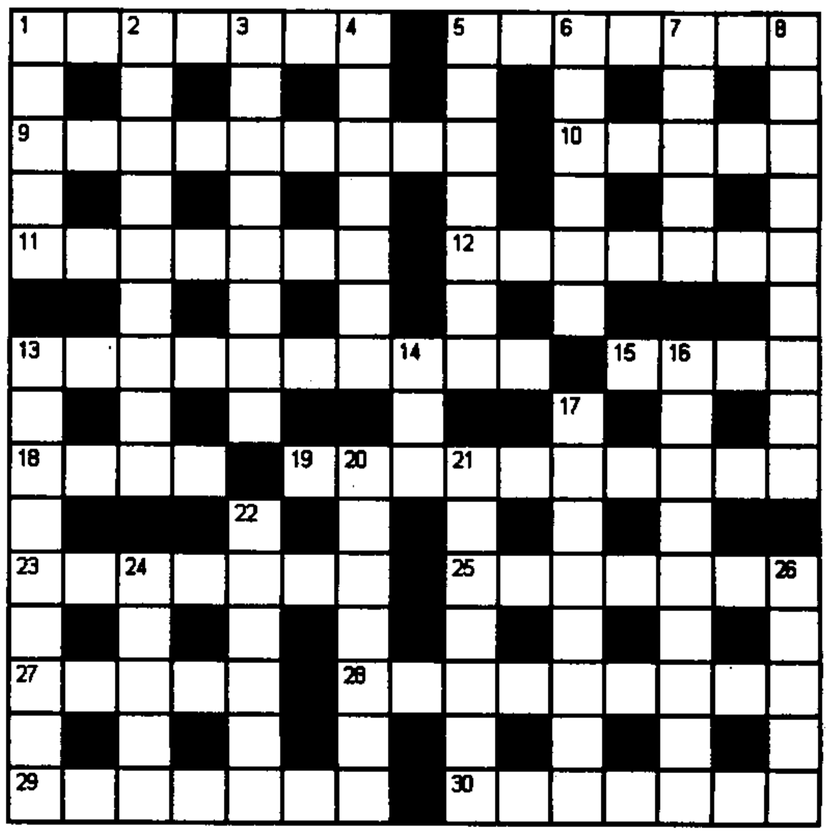
— ● —

● *"All staff should be on the lookout for a male patient in his early forties who has been visiting female doctors throughout Queensland over the past six months, apparently solely in order to have his genitals fondled. The man, who goes by the name of Jeremy Escalator, always uses the same story. He visits the surgeries of female doctors and female radiographers, says that his penis and testicles have been injured by a pasta-making machine, and asks to be 'fully examined and thoroughly splinted'. His behaviour, although disturbing, is not threatening, but the Medicare card he produces is stolen, and he is therefore committing a criminal offence."* (Queensland Health Service bulletin, November 1999. Spotter: Anon)



EYE CROSSWORD 146

by Cyclops *£100 prize*



ACROSS

1 Judge Archer extremely resentful without Tory leader (7)
5 Top politician, nothing on – in bare skin (4,3)
9 He thought a lot about being a Swiss cutie, one-off provocative type (9)
10 Kundera piece consumes one live (5)
11 Dyke was all a-flutter about Auntie's end (3-4)
12 Heartless Conservative holds a used dicky – one of seven (7)
13/6 Commons MP referred to as "Quite free of sleaze, cock" (10,6)
15 Something of a proletarian lay operatically (4)
18 Agitated Giscard d'Estaing right, yes to leave meat that could have been beef (4)
19 Queen-fearing House with masculine love aversion ... (10)
23 ... "Devil Queen, I will endlessly put at risk" (7)
25 Doing, er, arsing about: that's France's department (7)
27 The city will supply high grade joint on ring back (5)
28 Chelsea's way of deviously asking about Gennifer's extreme love ended by dad finally (5,4)
29 Chap loyal to the old Labour leader always ready to service Brenda? (7)
30 Conservative, taking stand, having an erection, burst into laughter (5,2)

DOWN

1 What's become of one who got fired? (5)
2 Cool, this, with Blair at the helm? (9)
3 Top Tory after one and only European seat of government! (3,5)
4 Brenda occasionally shows them off after booze up, one on one (7)
5 Some yob or stalker might once have been held here? (7)
6 (see 13ac)
7 Had a butchers butchered dog, the French would be involved (5)
8 Inviting a gay response as opposed to being queer? (5-2-2)
13 Bonk – but make sure you never do it again! (4,2,3)
14 Bishop needs, er, a seat (3)
16 Politician outed by "Cor! I love bonk!" (5,4)
17 Charm is somehow a quality not associated with Major (8)
20 Grease on strip put on by sailor in shower? (7)
21 Penis in charge – it's grown, naturally (7)
22 The coming of alternative fuel by start of millennium (6)
24 A man full of ideas crashed laptop endlessly! (5)
26 Eventually come to have arse in the air (3,2)

£100 prize to first solution opened on 16.12.99. Entries to 'Crossword', Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1V 5RG.

Solution to Crossword No. 145

Winner: GILL WOOLDRIDGE

ACROSS: 1 Crash 4 Sweatshop 9/20/23ac. Genetically modified crops 10 Nob 11 Riskier 12 Embryos 13 Travesty 15 Mexico 18 Eleven 20 (see 9) 23 Chateau 24 Calypso 26 Old 27 (see 1 dn.) 28 Smart-arse 29 Dakar.

DOWN: 1/27 Cigarette advertising 2 Aunts 3 Hot line 4 Security 5 Eileen 6 Toynbee 7 Henry VIII 8 Pubes 14 Alexandra 16 Old codger 17 Concorde 19 Eye Want 21 Ill wind 22 Quiver 23 (see 9) 25 Prick.

Bethlehem Times

25 December, 0 A.D.

Yes! It's Peace On Earth!

by Our Christmas Staff **Jon Snowman**

THERE WAS widespread rejoicing last night at the glad tidings that heralded a *new* era of peace on earth and goodwill towards men.

Gerry Christmas

The Angels' announcement came after thousands of years of armed conflict around the globe and was widely welcomed as a significant breakthrough for humankind.

However, the mood of euphoria was somewhat tempered by the news that Mr. Martin McHerod was to be put in charge of childcare for the province of Judea. Critics point to Mr. McHerod's alleged involvement in the slaughter of various innocents and *(continued chapter 94, verse 37)*

BLAIR BELIEVES IN BEARDED SANTA FIGURE

by Our Christmas Staff
Phil Stocking

THE PRIME Minister hit out last night at the cynics who refused to believe in the jolly bearded figure known to children as St. Gerry.

Mr. Blair was furious at the suggestion that the hirsute philanthropist would not deliver his gifts of guns at Christmas or even in February.

HO-HO HOME RULE!

"Of course he will," said Mr. Blair. "No-one knows how St. Gerry and his helpers will do it, but it is one of the central mysteries of Christmas."

Christmas is coming,
Cherie's getting fat.
Please put a vote
In Tony's hat.

Advertisement

WANTED

Conservative Mayoral Candidate

THE CONSERVATIVE Party is looking for a suitable candidate to run for the post of Mayor of London.

The candidate should ideally have the following qualifications:

- **Not be a terrific crook who tells lies all the time.**
- **Not have several mistresses and a history of casual legover.**
- **Not be a closet homosexual who will be outed at a crucial point in the campaign.**
- **Not be a Conservative who will be bound to lose.**

Candidates should apply in writing or get someone to do it for them if they are not bright enough.

The Conservative Party is an equal opportunities employer. We will not discriminate on the grounds of talent or ability

Day 94
Fugger vs. Freeloader

The case continued today

George Carphone QC *(acting for Mr Fugger)*: Mr Freeloader, if you would be so kind as to cast your mind back to the events of 1984 and in particular your special Winter Sleaze Break at the Writz Hotel in Paris.

Mr Freeloader: It's a lie!

Mr Fugger: It fuggin' well isn't!

Justice Cocklecarrot: Mr Carphone, I must ask you to restrain your client.

Mr Fugger: Don't you fuggin' try it Carfugger. Or you get no fuggin' fee!

Mr Carphone: I am indebted to you, Mr Fugger.

Mr Fugger: You certainly are...

Mr Cocklecarrot: Gentlemen, could we kindly get on with the matter in hand?

Mr Carphone *(Resuming his cross-examination)*: Mr Freeloader, do you recall what you ate for breakfast on the morning of March 2nd?

Mr Freeloader: It's a lie!

Mr Carphone: Do the words "grapefruit segments" refresh your memory at all, Mr Freeloader? And does the price of 40,000 francs per segment make the picture any less cloudy?

Mr Freeloader: You'll have to ask my wife.

Mr Carphone: I shall have that pleasure later but in the meantime I would be grateful if you would examine Bundle B.

Mr Freeloader: Is there any money in it?

Mr Cocklecarrot: There isn't any in mine.

Mr Fugger: That's because you don't fuggin' get any, until I win the fuggin' case.

(Laughter in court)

Mr Cocklecarrot: Mr Fugger, the court cannot tolerate any more of these outbursts.

Mr Fugger *(crying)*: I am just a poor working man who the Duke of Edinburgh has tried to murder on more than one occasion.

Mr Cocklecarrot: I see it is half past ten. Perhaps this is a suitable moment to adjourn for luncheon. This should allow Mr Fugger a few hours to recover his composure.

Mr Desmond Browne Nose OE, QC: Are you lunching at the Garrick today, M'Lud?

Mr Cocklecarrot: I am afraid that is Sub Judice.

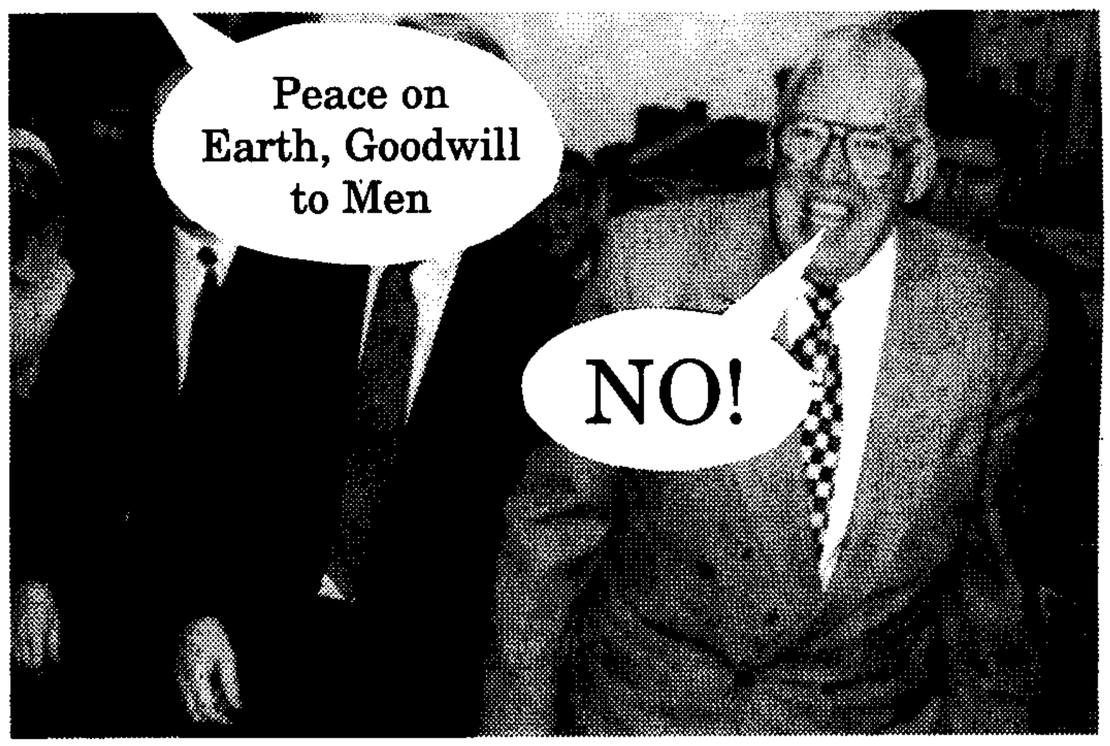
Mr Browne: I'll see you there.

(The case continues)

What the Freeloaders had for breakfast

15 Bottles vintage Krug champagne	100,000,000F
6 Bottles Chateau La Tour 1948	50,000,000F
1 Bowl Frosties	20,000F
1 Bowl Special K	30,000F
2 Slices brown toast with marmalade	25,000F
7 Lobsters in truffle sauce with caviar	200,000,000F
Confit of larks' tongues	700,000,000F
One boiled egg (with 'des soldats')	10,000 F
30,000 complimentary copies of the humorous magazine Punch	Free
TOTAL:	**10 Billion Francs**
	(service not included)

CHRISTMAS MESSAGE



ST ALBION PARISH NEWS

Incumbent: Rev. A.R.P. Blair MA (Oxon)

Hullo!

Firstly, Cherie and I would like to thank literally everyone in the parish for the thousands of letters, cards and flowers which have been pouring into the vicarage ever since the great news that we are going to have a Millennium baby!

Nothing brings people together more than the arrival of a new baby, as we are particularly aware at this time of the year!

Even people one wouldn't have expected have been kind enough to pop round to offer their good wishes. Like young Master Hague who, I am sure, one day will be old enough to have a baby of his own, rather than just looking like one (and acting like one!).

There's nothing like becoming a father to make a man a more mature and responsible individual! I don't want to sound pompous, but there must be a message there for Mr Brown! (I mean Gordon, not Nick obviously!)

But enough of the baby, even if it is the most important thing that's happened in the parish for a long time! I am sure you will all be pleased to hear that Cherie is absolutely blooming, and has even been out dancing with some of her friends in the amateur theatrical community – apparently, the newly refurbished Operatic Society function room above Boots in the High Street is looking marvellous! (Such a pity that the production of the Mikado had to be cancelled because Mr Smith and his partner hadn't finished making the curtains in time!)

Anyway, enough of Cherie and the baby, suffice it to say that everyone is very pleased about the Happy Event, and looking forward to our special service of Thanksgiving on December 25.

Please learn the following carols which the choir is already practising for that big occasion: Cherie's Boy (or Girl) Child; God Rest Ye Cherie; Ding Dong Cherily On High; and many other traditional favourites (suitably adapted for the occasion, words and music T. Blair!).

But I mustn't go on about the baby, because I know it's not fair to those who, unlike Cherie and myself, have not been lucky enough to have what in the olden days they used to call "a blessing", but what we now, in our more enlightened era, call an "unplanned conception event"!

We have to remember that many people in our society have to live for personal reasons on their own: like Mr Brown or Mr Kennedy, the new pastor of the United Liberal Methodists. Or even Mr Livingstone, who has only his newts to console him when he comes home from the office (no offence, Ken, but frankly you can't dandle a baby newt on your

knee, or be pictured kissing it on the front page of the local paper!).

I don't want in any way to sound smug over the fact that I am still capable of fathering a fourth child, when there are men a lot younger than me who seem to be incapable of having a first child, let alone a fourth! I am thinking of poor Master Hague (although, to look at him, you might think he is an old man, as he has lost all his hair and talks in a funny voice!).

I mustn't obviously devote the whole of this letter to the subject of the baby, but there is just one matter on which I would like to put everyone's mind at rest.

"How on earth will you cope, Vicar," everyone is asking "with all those sleepless nights?"

Look, my answer is that it won't make the slightest difference. I am up half the night anyway working to make St Albion's a better place for you all to live in. And sometimes I'm up all night sorting out the mess made by some of my colleagues on the PCC (see accompanying letter!).

But I'm not complaining! After all, that's why I'm the vicar! As the old phrase has it (and never was it more apt!): "It's my baby"! (And I promise that's the last time in this newsletter I mention that particular word!)

Yours,

Tony

PS. I forgot to mention that we have now of course entered the season of Advent, which is when we look forward to the birth of a very special baby!

Parish Postbag

Dear Vicar,

I was outraged to learn that behind our backs you were negotiating an ecumenical merger with the Church of the United Reformed Liberal Democrats, under their minister, the Rev. Ashdown. Those of us who remember the battles some of us have fought over the years to preserve the true faith, find the suggestion that

Yours faithfully,
T. Benn,
Typhoo Ho. Mazzawattee Estate,
Brooke Bond Road, PG T1PS.

The Editor reserves the right to shorten all letters due to reasons of space. A.C.

A Statement From Mr Prescott, Hon Secretary of the St Albion's Working Men's Club and PCC Transport Co-ordinator

Dear Everyone (Comrades),

I am getting heartily tired and sick of the constant sneering and sniping coming from certain quarters close to the vicarage (not to mention everybody else) about me making a pig's ear of the arrangements for car parking, cycle paths and bus lanes in and around the church, which is totally untrue, since I have started a number of important initiatives with regard to all of the above matters in pursuivance of my integranted strategy of getting the parish up and running on all four wheels, which is not to say that there are not problems of a problematic kind but my job would be made considerably bloody easier if I could rely on the support

Yours sincerely,
J. Prescott,
Working Men's Club.

(Mr Prescott's statement had to be very considerably cut on the grounds of space and general incoherence. I regret this. A.C.)

The Vicar replies:

I was very saddened to read John's heartfelt apology for the way he has recently been messing up his responsibilities on all fronts – according to his critics, that is! I think he is being too hard on himself. We all make mistakes from time to time. I may even have made some myself, in appointing certain people to jobs which are above their abilities: something one might be prone to do through feeling sorry for someone who hasn't had one's advantages in life, such as a good education and an ability to string two words together without making a fool of himself!
T.B.

St Gerry's Mission To Ireland

■ My heartfelt congratulations to all those who have been responsible for helping me to solve the Irish question in such a short time. When I took over from Mo, let's be honest, things were in a bit of a mess. Mr Trimble wasn't even talking to her (and who can blame him, quite honestly! Sometimes these things need a man's touch!) But now everyone is working together towards one goal, and a very seasonal one it is too – ie, peace on Earth and particularly in Northern Ireland! But there is one person who must take the credit for this brilliant breakthrough. Not me – but the man who had the courage and the foresight to appoint me to the job! P.M.

Thanks, Peter, for a very moving tribute. It's wonderful to have you back in the team! T.B.

THE NEW ST ALBION PARISH NEWS *Book Two* IS OUT NOW – £4.99

THOSE SINN FEIN CABINET POSITIONS IN FULL

MARTIN McGUINNESS
(Education Secretary)
Main duties: Teaching people *a proper* lesson

BAIRBRE DE BRUN
(Health Secretary)
Main duties: Hospital admissions (after they've been taught that lesson)

Those New Northern Ireland School Rules In Full

1. Fighting in the playground is compulsory.
2. Any weapons brought to school will not be confiscated.
3. Anyone placed in detention will be let out immediately.
4. There will be no marching in the corridor.
5. The following sports will be played: Cross Country Gun Running, Baseball Batting, Hurling (Grenades).
(That's enough lessons – Ed)

HUGE PILE OF MONEY OPENED IN COVENT GARDEN

By Our Opera Staff **Don G. O'Money**

A GLITTERING array of celebrities, headed by Her Majesty the Queen and the Prime Minister Tony Blair, last night attended the gala opening of the Royal Pile of Money in London's fashionable Covent Garden.

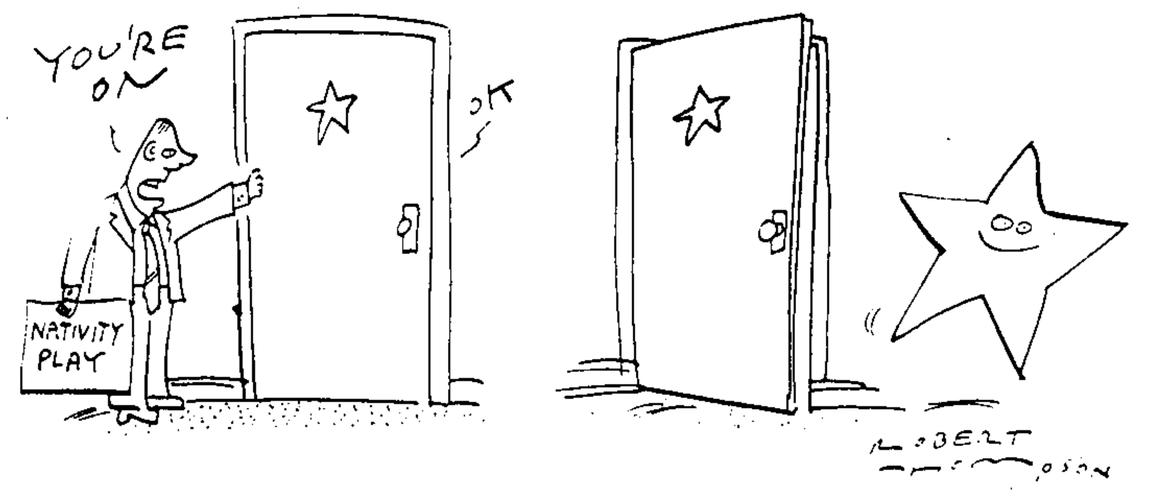
It had taken almost a quarter of a century to amass the most splendid collection of money London has ever seen.

There were gasps of amazement as the curtains parted to reveal a vast mountain of £50 pound notes, and cheques donated by some of the richest banks in the City of London.

Das Meingold
(The Goldmine)

Said Lord Isaacs, who has done more than anyone else to assemble the sackloads of cash which now tower over Covent Garden, "This is a tribute not only to my rich friends but also to all the poor people who have contributed so generously through the National Lottery Fund. Together they have helped to put Britain right back at the centre of the financial world."

"Let's get another drink — it's still the warm-up act"



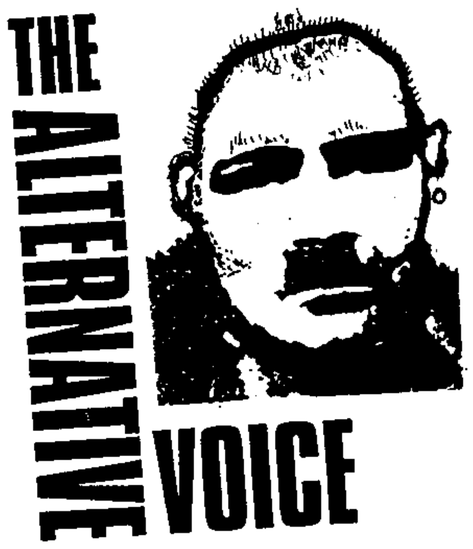
AMERICA WINS MESS WORLD COMPETITION

By Our Glamour Staff, **Polly Tickly-Incorrect**

THE CONTROVERSIAL Mess World competition held in Seattle was sensationally won yesterday by the American contestant, Bill Clinton, who told judges: "I want to travel the world and mess it up."

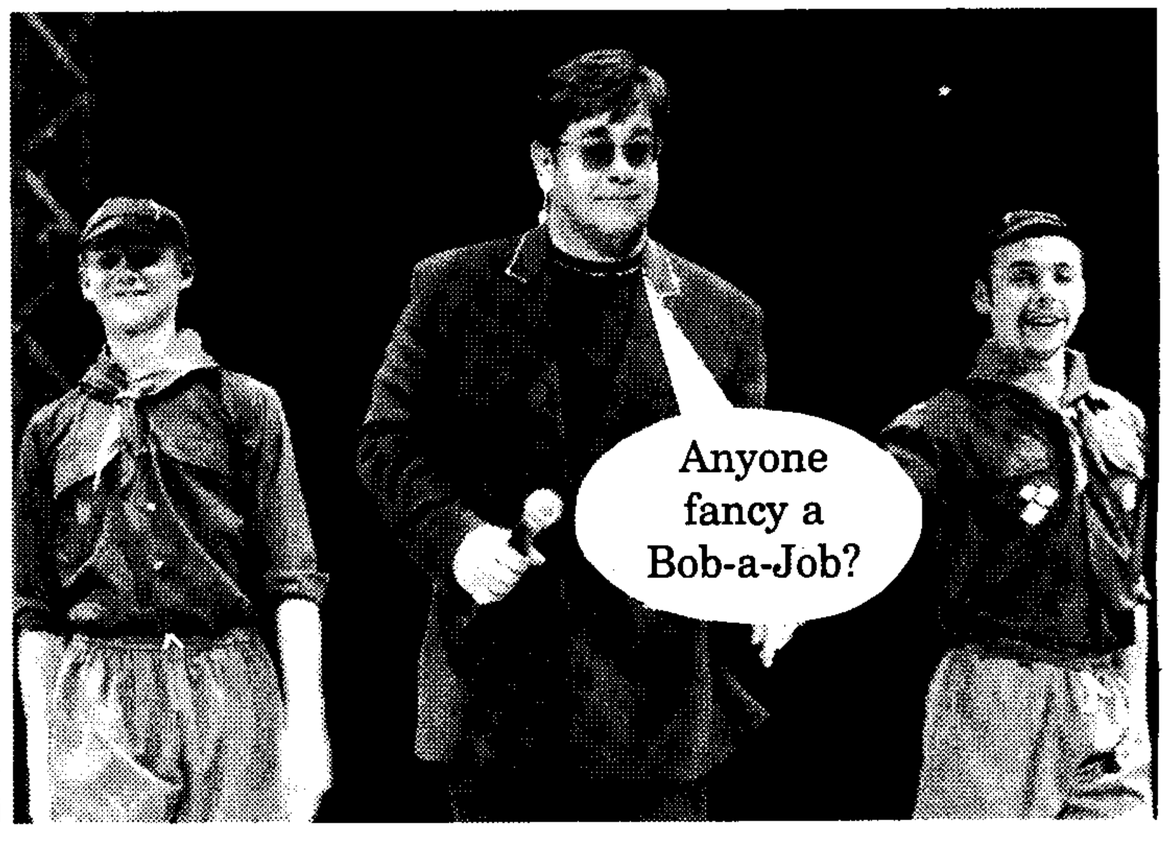
The sponsors of the event, The Mess World Trade Organisation, said that Mr Clinton had impressed the panel in each of the main categories: personality, charm and environmental irresponsibility.

Britain came a disappointing fourth behind Japan and Russia.
(Rotters)



Cedric Spart, Co-Chair of the Neasden Gay Olympic 2001 Committee and Bronze Medallist in this year's Throwing the Tantrum *(shurely 'discus'? Ed)*

... Er the reaction to Sir Elton John's totally innocent dance routine with a group of boy scouts is utterly sickening and merely confirms once again the totally repressive nature of the heterosexual establishment who consistently try and link homosexuality with paedophilia when everybody knows perfectly well that just because you are gay does not mean you are interested in little boys as Sir Elton proved by his lighthearted and utterly amusing rendition of "It's a sin and a criminal offence" whilst fondling the semi-naked dancers in their tight uniforms er.... er... the total and complete mis-representation of this incident by the hetero-fascist media shows
(cont. p. 94)



Phone-In Day

Daily Telegraph Charity Appeal

All these poor journalists are waiting at the end of a 'phone-line for you to ring them.
They are lonely, depressed and have no idea of what to put in their paper. Have you got an idea, or maybe an old story, to help them fill the Telegraph over Christmas? The lines are open now.
Please help!

Charles Moore
Editor

Sarah Sands
Deputy Editor

W.F. Deedes
Columnist

Victoria Combe
Religious Correspondent

Hilary Alexander
Fashion Editor

Robin Page
Columnist

James Le Fanu
Medical Columnist

Tilney Woodall
Weekend Fashion

George Jones
Political Editor

How Your Gifts Can Help

Liz Hurley
An old picture of this famous actress will fill up a whole page.

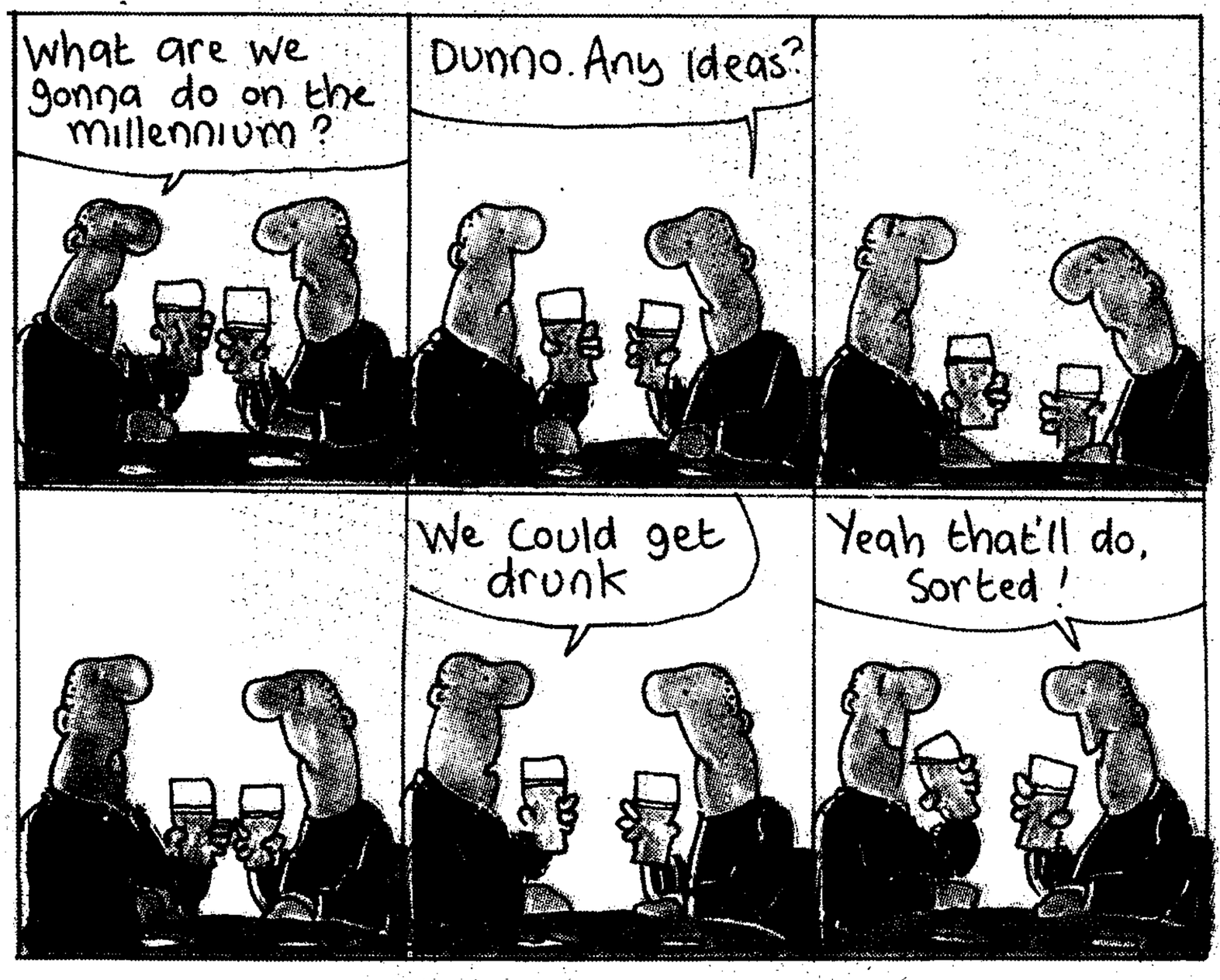
Hunting
A letter in favour of fox-hunting or the RUC will go straight in.

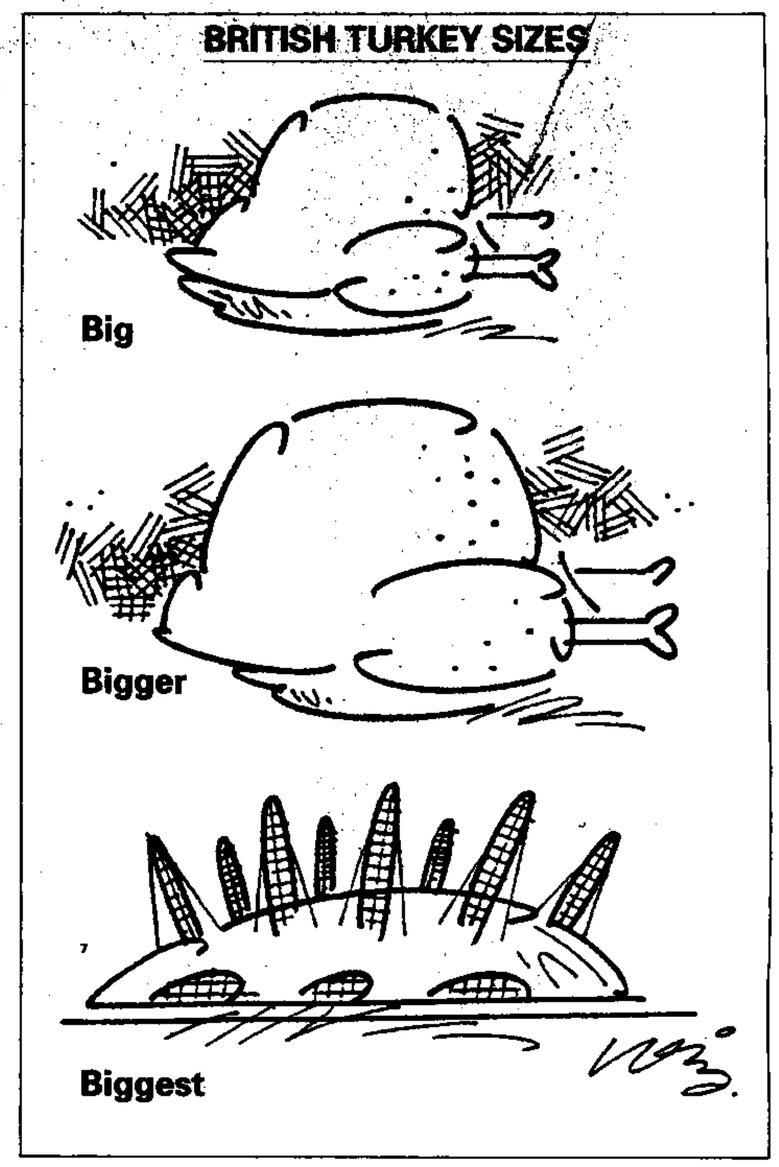
Soldiers
A 2500-word obituary of Brigadier "Chalky" Fotherington-Massingberd MC DSO will fill up the rest of the paper.

0800 500 118

Remember – lines are open every day of the week until lunchtime.

HUSBAND





BLAIR TO BAN 'MORNING AFTER' PILL

by Our Medical Correspondent **Prof. Phil Actic**

PRIME MINISTER Tony Blair last night announced new plans to clamp down on the handing-out of the so-called "morning after" pills to teenage girls below the age of 16.

"This is a complete waste of valuable resources," he said. "These pills should only be made available to 45-year old career women. This is the group in society which has recently displayed a complete lack of responsibility over contraception, placing an unfair burden on their partners who are trying to run the country."

Cherie Blair is 45. *(Reuters)*

RUGBY STAR ACQUITTED SHOCK

by Our Court Staff **Rod Rage**

MR Jeremy Guscott, the international rugby player, was last week found to be "famous" by a jury in Bristol.

The England centre was accused of grievous bodily harm after an incident on a pedestrian crossing, but the jury decided that he was "clearly on television" and all the evidence pointed to him being "a celebrity".

They therefore agreed that Gaskett was beyond any reasonable doubt "pretty nippy over 25 metres" and reached a majority verdict of "guilty of scoring jolly good tries for England".

The court then rose to give Mr Blow-a-Gasket a standing ovation.

That Honorary Degree Citation In Full

SALUTAMUS CHERRYBRANDYENSIS BLAIRISSIMA (NATA BOOTHA) FILIA ANTONIUS BOOZUS (THESPIANUS NOTORIUS IN VIA CORONATIONE ET SCOUSUS GITTUS IN COMEDIA SERIALIS USQUE AD MORTEM CUM ALFREDO GARNETTO); UXOR PULCHERRIMA AD ANTONIO BLAIRISSIMO, CAESAR MAGNIFICUS ET OMNIPOTENTIS, SUPREMUS DUX UNIVERSALIS, PONTIFEX MAXIMUS ET REVERENDUS SANCTUS ALBIONENSIS. SED IN TUA PROPRIA PERSONA, ADVOCATA SUPERBA ET OPULENTA, PUPILLA FAVORITA DERRIUS IRVINI (DOMINE LAIRGI). SED SUPRA OMNIA, MATER FECUNDISSIMA AD XLV ANNOS, CONCEPTIONIS MIRACULOSUS ET CONVENIENTUS. STUPOR MUNDI! GAUDEAMUS! GLORIA IN EXCELSIS BLAIRO!

© UNIVERSITATE WESTMONASTERIUM (QUONDAM POLYTECHNICO BARBICANO NEASDENSIS QUIK-SAVE SPONSORIS) MCMIX.

SHOULD TAKI BE RETURNED TO GREECE?

by Our Antiquities Staff
Lord Elginandtonic

THERE were renewed demands last night that Britain should hand back the world-famous Taki to Greece.

Taki was brought to London from Athens many decades ago by a bargain-hunting English aristocrat, Lord Henry Keswick, who wished to exhibit him in the pages of the Spectator as an example of classical Greek decadence.

BORIC COLUMNS

The call for the sending back of what one expert has described as "This disgusting pile of old rubbish," came from British art lovers who cannot stand the thought of the Taki remaining on these shores a moment longer.

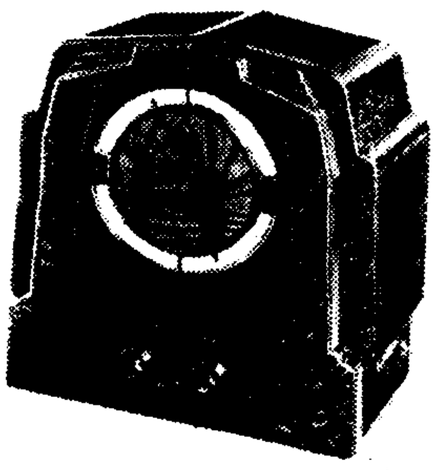
But fierce opposition to the repatriation has come from his native Greece. "We have far too many of his sort here already," said a leading Athenian curator, "and you British can keep him.

"We understand that his condition has deteriorated badly since he has been in London. He is covered in white dust and his nose is missing."

"He is all slimy," said the distinguished expert, "and in his present state is no use to anyone."

Taki Takalotofcokupthenos is 2500 years old.

ROY of the LOSERS
IT'S ONLY SUITABLE FOR FOOTBALL
THEN WHERE ARE ENGLAND GOING TO PLAY?
THIS NEW STADIUM DESIGN IS A DISASTER
FOSTERS
COOPER



THE TODAY PROGRAMME

What You Missed

Sue McGhastly *(for it is she)*: ...and with more news of that church massacre in South London, we have in the studio the Catholic priest Father O'Ted. Father?

O'Ted: Good morning, Sue.

McGhastly: Father O'Ted, now I know you weren't in the church at the time when this awful tragedy took place, but if you had been can you imagine what you might have seen?

O'Ted: Well, may I say first what a terrible shock and trauma this news has been to the whole Catholic community.

McGhastly: Yes, but what about the sword? Do you think you would have seen the assailant running up and down the aisles, slashing at terrified members of the congregation, including old-age pensioners and toddlers?

O'Ted: *Well*, Sue, as I say, I wasn't actually there.

McGhastly: Yes, but surely you can use your imagination. There you are, standing at the altar, and suddenly this maniac bursts in and starts hacking people to death. There's blood spurting everywhere, limbs flying across the pews. It must have been pretty terrible, mustn't it?

O'Ted: Yes, that's right, Sue.

McGhastly: And now, could I come to you, Jack Straw? Can I ask you, as Home Secretary, how long it will be before the Government imposes a long-overdue ban on Samurai swords? I mean, this terrible massacre would never have happened if these appallingly dangerous weapons were not easily available in the High Street.

Straw: Quite right, Sue. And I'm glad to announce that I'm going to introduce an emergency Bill to close all churches on Sundays, to ensure that a tragedy like this is never repeated. It's a crackdown on Samurai mass-murder. And we're serious about this.

McGhastly: Thank you, Home Secretary. And now, the weather with Sally Isobar. Sally, apparently there's going to be rain in Northern Ireland and Western Scotland, with snow on high ground, but slightly warmer in the south with occasional showers coming in later in the day?

Isobar: Thank you, Sue.

McGhastly: And now over to my colleague Jim Naughtie, whom I think is going to ask Jeremy Isaacs whether all these billion of pounds they've spent on the new Royal Opera House has been justified. And I suspect Lord Isaacs is going to reply "yes".

Naughtie: That's right, Sue.

Isaacs: Yes, Sue.

Sue Megalomaniac: And now, back to me *(continues in same vein for several hours)*.

"Er, no thanks. I think we've got enough lambs now"

EURO SOARS TO NEW LOW

Single Currency Plunges To New High

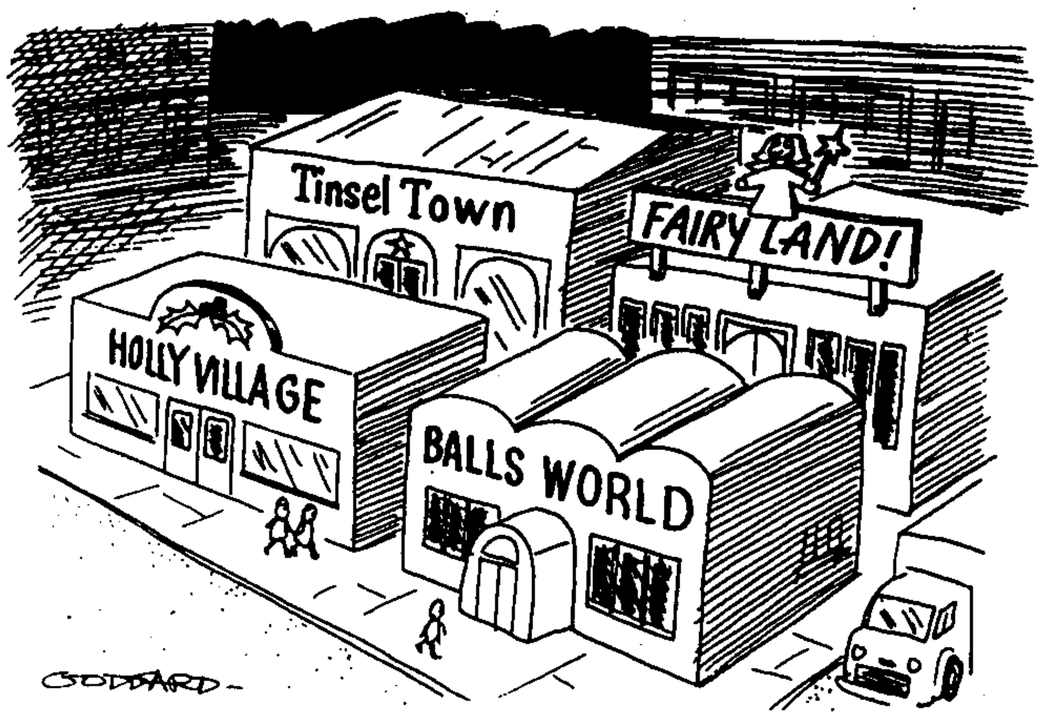
by Our Euro Is Marvellous Staff
Anatole Kaletsnotbebeastlyabouttheeurosky

CHAMPAGNE corks were popping in the capitals of euroland last night as the much-vaunted single European currency equalled the value of the once-mighty dollar.

When I spoke off the record to a very senior official of the European Central Bank (Mr E. Izzard), he told me: "Ze euro is marvellous. Whatever she does is just great.

"She go up – it's brilliant. She go down – it's even better. How unlike your stupid boring old pound which just stays the same all the time."

All I can say is that here in Europe I witnessed old-age pensioners dancing openly in the streets, as they gave three cheers for the titan of EU finances, Mr Wim Duisenberg, who said: "If the euro is a sound investment, then I'm a Dutchman."



DIRTY LINEN EXHIBITION FAILS TO WIN PRIZE

by Our Art Staff **Tracey Email**

THE CONTROVERSIAL con-artist, Mr Jeffrey Archer, failed to impress the judges of the Mayor prize last week with his now famous exhibition of dirty laundry.

Entitled "My Bed With Various Women In It", Mr Archer's entry for the Mayor Prize was described by critics as "grubby", "tacky", "soiled", "disgusting" and "a marvellous work of integrity and probity" (W. Hague, Daily Telegraph).

The con-artist, Mr Archer, said that he was disappointed not to win the prize.

"This dirty linen is a summary of my whole career. I can't believe it has been rejected."

JEFFREY ARTIST

However, he stood by his entry and told journalists "This is my bed and I've got to lie in it. Mostly to my wife."

The prize went instead to Mr Ken Livingstone, a dead-pan conceptual artist, who has recreated scenes from a classic farce of the 1980s ("The GLC" starring Buster Budget) in which a town hall collapses on top of the hero but he emerges miraculously unscathed.

IS POSH TOO THIN?

by Phil Plate

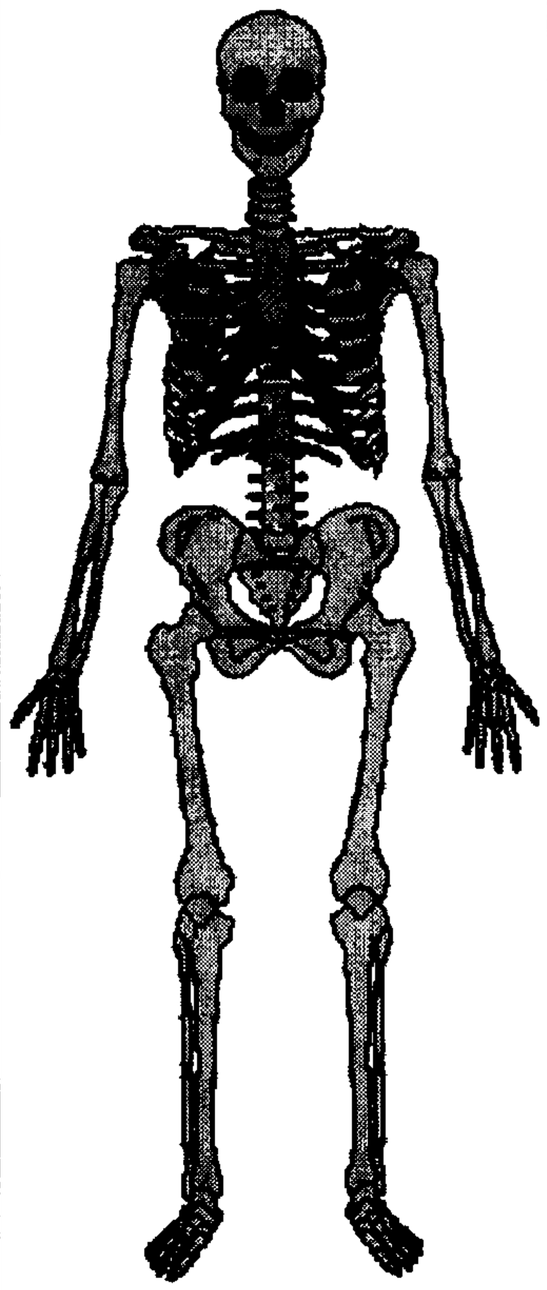
THIS IS the question that the whole *world is* asking after seeing this *recent* photograph of Victoria Beckham at a showbiz party.

Looking gaunt and fragile, the Spice Girl drew gasps from fans:

"She seems to have lost an awful lot of weight," said one. "She's just skin and bone," said another. "Or rather, just bone."

But Posh was having none of it. *(And that was just her dinner. Ed.)*

"These rumours about me being bulimic make me want to throw up," she told reporters. "I am very happy with my figure, ie 4 stone."



Posh: shock pic

IS BECKHAM TOO THICK?

by Phil Plato

THIS IS the question that the whole world is asking after reading an interview with the footballer in OK Magazine. But Beckham was quick to play down worries about his recent thickness.

"I have always been thick," he said. "I may have got a bit thicker since having a baby. Or was that Victoria who did that? I can't remember."

IS VANESSA FELTZ TOO FAT?

by Phil Dress

THIS IS the question that the whole world *(That's enough questions. Ed.)*

SIR CLIFFWELL RICHARD

An Apology

IN RECENT weeks, in common with all other newspapers, we have published numerous articles, columns and editorials suggesting that the recording by Sir Cliff Richard of the Lord's Prayer set to the tune of Auld Lang Syne was in some way a tasteless and cynical attempt to exploit the 2000th birthday of Christ for purely mercenary ends. Headlines such as "Cliff's Christmas Bummer Makes Youy Wanna Puke", "Sir Cliff's Xmas (S)Hit" abd "Wrinkly's No-Hoper Won't Make The Top 500" may have given the impression that we held Sir Clifford's latest contribution to popular music in low esteem.

We would like to offer our unreserved apologies to Sir Cliffwell for those wholly unwarranted slurs. We now realise that his recording has captured the essential spirit of the forthcoming Millennium as has no other, and has rightly climbed to its deserved position as No. 1 in the nation's hit parade, where we trust it will remain for centuries to come. God bless you, Cliff!

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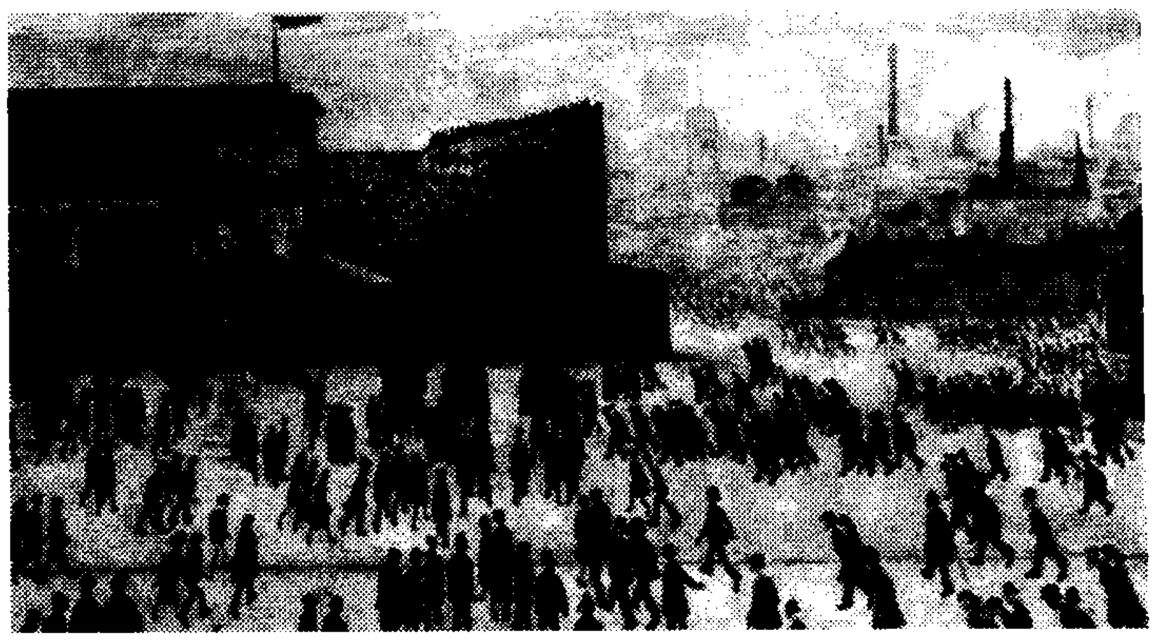
NEW STADIUM DESIGN FOR WEMBLEY

How it will look



HEATH'S PRIVATE VIEW

The office PARTY
I MUST HAVE MIS-HEARD YOU. I THOUGHT YOU SAID YOU WERE A BANKER!
WE'VE NEVER SPOKEN BUT I'VE LOVED YOU EVER SINCE I SAW YOU IN THE LIFT...
GO ON OL' MY SON, JUMP!
I DONT SLEEP WITH MY WIFE ANY MORE...
A FAG! I NEED A FAG!
THAT'S PERKINS, I'VE JUST FIRED HIM
THEY'RE SUCH WANKERS IN ACCOUNTS! WARM VIN ROUGE ISN'T GOOD ENOUGH!
AND MAY I TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY SIR, TO SAY I THINK YOU'RE DOING A SUPER JOB HERE
HA! HA! HA! HE'S JUST KIDDING SIR! HE REALLY REALLY LIKES YOU!
OK, SO YOU'RE THE BOSS! BUT YOU'RE STILL A PILLOCK! WHAT A PRAT! YOU MAKE ME PUKE!
YOUR WILLY!
RAP!
THUD! THUD
BOOM! BOOM!
THUD!
THUD!
THUD!
HAVING FUN?
'ERE YOU TWO, YOU'RE NOT ON T.V NOW YOU KNOW!
ZZZZ...
THUD!
THUD!
THUD!
THUD!
CAN YOU GET WIVES AND DAUGHTERS?
NO BUT I CAN GET YOU DICK-INS!
GEDOIT?
PANT! PANT!

DIARY

My name is Donal MacIntyre. I'm a reporter for the BBC. I've spent the last year using every disguise and device at my disposal to get inside the dark and murky world of the boiled sweet.

Boiled sweets — red, yellow, green, soft-centred and hard-centred — cost the ordinary decent people of this country over ten billion pounds a year.

They are sold over the counter, often in broad daylight, in up to five thousand different outposts across the land.

And sometimes they are sold to innocent and vulnerable children as young as three or four years of age.

It is an industry that is indifferent to the anguished shrieks that resound from the dentist's chair.

It is a worldwide operation that blocks up its victims' mouths for long periods at a time — often leaving their fingers horribly sticky.

And this ruthless conspiracy of sucking is blind to the effect sweetie wrappers have on our environment.

Over a twelve-month period, involving intense preparation and a variety of disguises, I set out to buy an entire packet of boiled sweets from one of these self-styled "sweetie shops".

It was a journey that was to take me from exhilaration to despair, from terror to relief, and from the safety of an ordinary street pavement right into the very heart of one of the busiest sweetie shops in Britain.

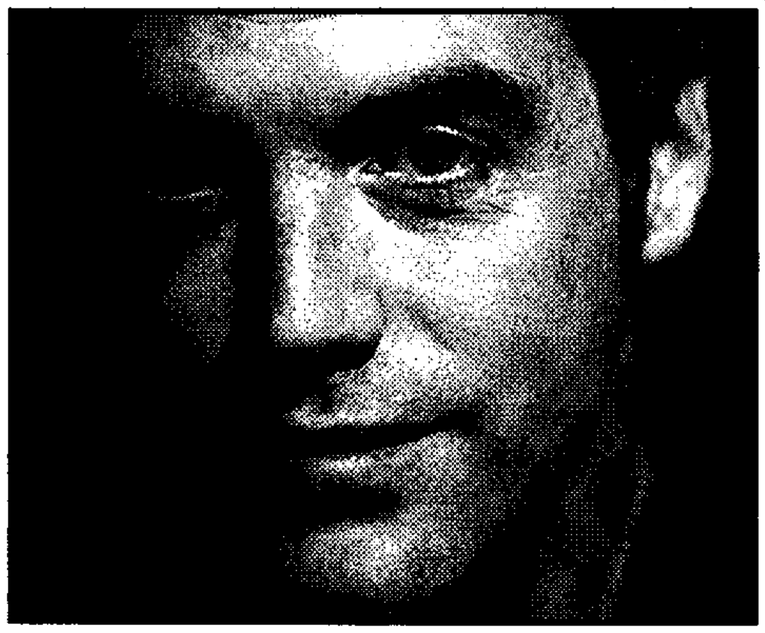
But first I had to find a new identity. If I was to penetrate the inner sanctum of one of the most notorious sweet shops in Europe I was going to have to play the role of a potential victim. For a year, I would have to shed my own identity — and quite literally become someone else.

First, I had to come up with a plan. Taking the advice of one of the world's top experts in the field — Trevor Mindt, Professor of Comestibles at the University of East Luton — I would no longer be Undercover Reporter Donal MacIntyre. No — from now on I would be Shirley Elizabeth MacIntyre, a little girl of ten years old.

Painstakingly sifting through evidence culled from one of the largest libraries of its kind in the world, *I was to* discover that to prove effective in my guise as Shirley Elizabeth I should develop a lisp, carry a Barbie Doll and wear a pink party dress at all times.

My first task was to strip off and equip myself *with top*-secret undercover recording equipment, brilliantly designed to give a fuzzy picture of ceilings at all times.

First stop — Mothercare. I was now on the



MACINTYRE UNDERCOVER

front line — and I was sweating profusely.

MacIntyre Undercover: Hello. My name ith Thirley. I am a ten year old girl. I would like to buy a pink dwess pleathe.

Shop assistant: No you're not, you're a grown man. I'm going to call the manager. Mr Bolton! Mr Bolton!

I rushed from the store, terrified for my life. Had I ruined my biggest opportunity? I had made an elementary mistake. I had sounded like a ten year old girl — but I had forgotten to dress like one.

My impersonation had been rumbled.

After sleepless nights, I came up with a plan. Terrified that I might be recognised in Mothercare, I was to enter Laura Ashley — this time as Dave, or "Dive", the Cockney father of Shirley Elizabeth. After six weeks intensive training in Cockney rhyming slang, I was ready to live the role.

MacIntyre undercover: Any old iron, any old iron, any any any old ir-on!

Assistant: Can I help you sir?

MacIntyre Undercover: Gorblimey, mate! Chim-chim-enee, chim-chim-enee, chim-chim-cheree! Oi'd loike a pink dress. Not for moi-self, you understan', mate, nah, oi never wear dresses, prefer jeans me'self, but for moy ten-year-old girl, Shirl, 'oo lives darn at vee ol' bull and bush — bush, bush. Alwight, mate?

Assistant: Certainly, sir. *(hands over dress).*

I had cracked it. My intense psychological game of chess with the store assistant had paid off.

For a second, I had been petrified she had guessed from the satellite dish stuck on my head that I was an undercover reporter — but I needn't have worried.

I had my pretty pink dress. Now was the time to close in on my prey. In MacIntyre Undercover, I had already ripped the lid off three top-secret worlds.

In a shocking exclusive, I had prised the roof off the football hooligan — revealing a world in which overweight men regularly drink beer and use strong language.

Penetrating the murky depths of the far-from-glamorous fashion industry, I had pieced together devastating evidence that in the supposedly sophisticated world of haute couture there are middle-aged men who enjoy having sexual intercourse with young women.

And dressing up as a string of sausages, I had uncovered shocking proof that internationally acclaimed light entertainers Pinky and Perky were not talking piglets after all — but glove puppets, secretly controlled by highly skilled human hands. Since this expose, their jobs have been suspended, pending official investigation.

But these operations would be a piece of cake compared to the task that lay before me now.

Purchasing a mixed bag of boiled sweeties.

And living to tell the tale.

(Ding-dong!)

Sweetshop assistant: Yes, sir?

MacIntyre Undercover: My name is Thirley Elizabeth. I am ten yearth old. Do you like my dreth?

(At this point, he looked at me suspiciously. Had he rumbled my cover? I began sweating profusely)

Sweetshop assistant: Yes, sir.

MacIntyre Undercover: A mixed bag of boiled sweetieth, pleath.

Sweetshop Assistant *(handing over the bag)*: That'll be 35p please sir!

Phew! I had psyched myself into the role — and got away with it! And what's more I now had the shop assistant's left elbow clearly on camera! But what to do with the boiled sweets? I took them immediately to the toilet of a high-class hotel. And flushed them away.

I wanted no more to do with the sinister world of the boiled sweetie. I had to move on.

Tomorrow, I would risk my life investigating Monopoly — and uncovering the Big Lie that daily lures innocent victims into thinking they can buy Liverpool Street Station for just £200.

As told to

CRAIG BROWN

Celeb

LIGGER

AS A MODEL TURNED ACTRESS AND TV PERSONALITY, WINNING THIS AWARD MEANS A LOT TO ME, GARY.
IT'S THE BEST POSSIBLE RESPONSE TO THOSE SNIPING CRITICS WHO SAY I'VE GOT WHERE I AM BY JUST FLUTTERING MY EYELASHES AND POUTING.
THERE'S A LOT MORE TO ME THAN JUST A PRETTY FACE, GARY.
ABSOLUTELY, DARLING.
THIS IS THE HAPPIEST DAY OF MY LIFE.
DEBS WINS REAR OF THE YEAR AWARD
WELL DONE, LOVE. I'M PROUD OF YOU.

Literary Review

Noel's house party

The Dons: Mentors, Eccentrics and Geniuses
Noel Annan
(HarperCollins, £17.99)

NOW well into his 80s, a former youthful provost of King's College Cambridge, latterly vice-chancellor of the University of London, (Lord) Noel Annan belongs to what these days is a nearly extinct category — the liberal elitist.

Anyone remember liberal elitists? Think Bloomsbury, or rather its reheated leftovers. Think the theoretical wing of the inter-war Labour party. Essentially the liberal elitists were the gang of mostly well-bred and predominantly pinko intellectuals who combined a belief in equality of opportunity and the value of extension lectures for the working classes with a firm conviction that power was best exercised by a band of well-connected brainboxes like, well, themselves.

It's significant, perhaps, that one of Lord Annan's previous books was called *Our Age* — the title strikes just the right kind of proprietorial note. Well, Mrs Thatcher (a touchstone of the liberal elitist approach is complete contempt for that lady and her works) has been and gone, the meritocrats have reduced both major political parties to senseless disarray, the Oxbridge common rooms are full of disobliging ex-grammar school boys, and yet still Lord Annan and his diminishing band of seigneurial old survivors press on.

He turned up, illuminatingly, a couple of years ago in Regina Marler's excellent little book about the marketing of Bloomsbury (*Bloomsbury Pie*, Virago 1997) complaining to Leonard Woolf about the canting modern critics who persisted in discussing Keynes as if he were an ordinary man. "He was not." Presumably Keynes ate, slept and defecated like the rest of us? But that's liberal elitism for you.

The Dons, a further product of Lord Annan's fertile retirement, has the quintessential liberal elitist's stamp. Looking for a history of British intellectual life as lived out in our major universities? You won't find it here. There's some scene-setting introductory stuff and an appendix containing the well-known essay on "The Intellectual Aristocracy", which turns out to be a list of who was related to whom; but most of the 350 pages are given over to a row of pen-portraits. "The Don as Wit" (CM Bowra), "The Don as Performer" (GH Rylands), "The Don as Dilettante" (John Sparrow) — that kind of thing.

Erudite, garrulous, above all anecdotal, full of rib-tickling accounts of what some venerable high table guest said to his host in *1913*, The Dons is also oddly derivative. Certainly the Sparrow chapter is not much more than a recension of John Lowe's 1998 biography.

And what kind of people are presented here for our edification, what kind of educators had the intellectual custody of our sons and daughters in, let us say, the mid-twentieth century? Well, Bowra was an envious score-settler; Rylands a rent-boy chasing mother obsessive; Sparrow a reactionary trifler who spent his quarter century as warden of All Souls resisting every enlightened move simply for the fun of it. Stout chaps of course, tireless workers in a number of courses (Rylands the promoter of Shakespeare; Bowra the far-sighted college administrator) but... The Bowra encomium in particular is one of the most wretched exposes of so-called "wit" one ever came across, simply a succession of high-class parlour games (Bowra speculations on the likely finals results of famous names included T.S. Elliot getting an aegrotat, which is *utterly hilarious*) and when I came to the account of a paralytic Sparrow stopped by the police for drunk driving and remarking to his fellow-passenger "did we hit that baby as we turned into the High?" I'm afraid I merely wished the old sot alive again so I could punch him on the nose.

Ominously enough, Annan has virtually nothing to say about significant university teachers of the past half-century — C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien, Neville Coghill — men who in the words of Kingsley Amis's poem *Their Oxford* were "big enough to laugh at" (for the sake of fairness it should be pointed out that Amis put Bowra in this category). The final chapter, "Down with the Dons" — a reference to Professor John Carey's famous debunking essay — is also predictably reluctant to take on the charges (favouritism, indifference to the vast majority of their students, studied otherworldliness) habitually levelled at Bowra, Sparrow and Co. John Carey tells a story of being invited, as a very junior fellow of Christ Church, to some college beanfeast where a visiting eminence asked Professor Sir Roy Harrod who he was. Harrod flung Carey a look. "Oh, that's no one," he briskly explained.

There in a nutshell is the reason a certain kind of upper-society university life had to end. Annan leaves us with a few sad glimpses of cash-straitened modern common rooms, their assets reduced by Mrs T. and her successors, bedevilled by bibliometrics and the demands of fund-raising. Oddly enough, despite its grounding in the attitudes of a bygone age, this is a hugely revealing book. Mrs Thatcher, "Down with the Dons", the end of the gilded trifler — all this, as Lord Annan demonstrates without ever quite admitting it to himself, *had to happen*.

WHAT YOU DIDN'T MISS Pt 94

Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason
Helen Fielding

Friday 3 December

9st 3, bank balance £2 million, no. of phone calls from publisher asking 'where is it?' 17

7 a.m. Am never going to write Bridget Jones nonsense again. Feel have moved on into new phase of career. Will be significant woman novelist in manner of M. Drabble, or F. Weldon. Plus integrity v. important.

8.30 a.m. But then is v. nice getting profiled in *Vogue*, *Tatler*, *E. Standard* etc. Also feel have duty to us Singletons who need advice on important things. Plus publisher is saying they have given v. big sum of money and where the bloody hell is it. Perhaps will write one more B. Jones and then become mysterious literary recluse. Or something.

10 a.m. Problem is what to put in book.

10.15 a.m. Ooh. Could mention friends like Colin Firth, Nick Hornby, Salman Rushdie who will then be v. pleased and give quotes for jacket.

10.30 a.m. Other problem is what to put in after that.

11.45 a.m. Am marvellous, am fantastic. Filled with new vigour and positive thought. Have decided to recycle old newspaper columns in *Independent* and *Daily Telegraph*. Brill. Is v. easy being successful writer, have decided. Off go. Wheee! Print out book and send to publishers.

3 p.m. Aargh. Is dozens of reviews in *Guardian*, *Observer* etc saying book is dismal, unfunny stereotyping of Singleton women, is this what feminism fought for etc.

Later...

9st 0, good reviews 0, sales of book 200,000.

Hah! You see what one can do when one is empowered new person? Feel v. sorry for bitter, twisted critics who clearly cannot write books themselves. Think will just have little glass of wine and cigarette (*continues indefinitely...*)

BOOKS & BOOKMEN

■ QUOTING selectively from reviews is an old trick, but Little Brown Jug has gone to extremes in its desperation to flog *Whatever Love Means*, the latest novel by comedian David Baddiel.

Among the expert witnesses cited in the book's press ad is Julie Burchill, who reviewed it for the *Grauniad* and apparently pronounced it "a tale of our times".

Er... only up to a point. Referring to Baddiel's former comedy partnership with Rob Newman, the original Burchill sentence reads: "Their fortunes since the split tell a tale of our times' tragic predilection for mediocrity over merit". The "breathtakingly beautiful, incandescently sensitive" Newman's writing career has "faltered", while Baddiel, who "didn't look so much like Newman's partner as like his afterbirth" has "thrived".

Her final judgement? "For myself, I would happily settle for never being left alone with one of his books for the remainder of my lifetime."

■ SO, Simon & Schuster's affable, beardy UK md Nick Webb has gone after eight years' running the company, replaced by Ian Chapman from Macmillan.

The money – believed to be not unadjacent to £150,000 a year — is attractive, but is it the right move for Chapman, who may find he has a hard time pleasing the American owners, Viacom?

The company has grown impressively during Webb's tenure but still lacks the kind of profile enjoyed by the larger UK publishers, something the Americans want it to have. In addition, the much-hyped Scribner list of upmarket paperbacks launched by Webb last year is not thought to have set the bookstores alight. Webb is apparently going to "pursue other professional interests" and some have suggested he may turn to writing thrillers. Cynics wonder if the Yanks weren't only too happy to give him the freedom to realise those ambitions.

'Bookworm'

IN THE BACK

NATIONAL LOTTERY

*Nil*lennium fever

CAMELOT bosses, who have imposed a news blackout on sales figures for tickets to the Greenwich dome, are suffering more pre-millennial stress after a poor first month in sales for the National Lottery Big Draw 2000.

Before tickets for the latter went on sale on 1 November, lottery organisers boasted of a "one in a million chance to become a millionaire" and predicted the game would create 25 new millionaires on 31 December.

The company, which risks losing the lottery when its contract runs out next year, has gambled heavily on the success of the new year's eve bonanza. It has launched an intensive marketing campaign intended to reach every household in Britain, and a £3m advertising drive. But it is doubtful how much of this Camelot will win back.

For every millionaire created one million tickets must be sold at £5 each. Even if Camelot is correct that sales will soar on the night of the draw, it is surely still cause for concern that only £3m-worth of tickets has been sold in the first month. So far Camelot has created precisely three fifths of a millionaire.

And what of Camelot's own chances of remaining in the money and keeping its contract? Despite many misgivings about its past behaviour and performance, chancellor Gordon Brown now relies on lottery funds to such an extent he is unlikely to want to see any interruption in the flow.

Still, Camelot is taking no chances and has gone to extraordinary lengths to help Labour feel good about the deal. One of Labour's biggest embarrassments in sticking with Camelot is the whiff of bribery attached to the consortium. So what better way to make the government forget the way Gtech put people on the payroll to win contracts than... er... putting people on the payroll?

Camelot's key hiring has been to take on Sue Slipman as "director of corporate responsibility". Slipman is not exactly a key Labour insider, but she does have a seat on Chris Haskins's "Better Regulation Taskforce". Her secret is that as a former communist who joined the SDP, she has travelled a similar political path to many of Tony Blair's favourites and knows how to press their buttons.

Her first stunt at Camelot was to begin a "social and ethical audit" of the firm. This tough inspection of Camelot's morals was launched in March but handily won't present its report until after the preferred bidder for the lottery is announced.

The audit also involves hiring Charlie Leadbetter, the ex-Demos man who is "Blair's favourite intellectual". Funnily enough, Camelot has also hired Hobsbawm Macaulay, the PR firm run by the Gordon Brown's girlfriend.

JUSTICE REFORM

Quick, quick, slow

WITH typical arrogance Lord Chancellor Derry "call me Cardinal Wolsey" Irvine has ignored the panel of experts he set up to advise him on the impact of civil justice reforms which are supposed to obtain speedier justice for all.

Last July, with mounting evidence that new court fees were actually *shutting* the door to vast swathes of potential litigants, the civil justice council — headed by Lord Woolf, the architect of reform — wrote to warn the lord chancellor.

In no uncertain terms it advised him that the fixed £80 "allocation fee" charged for assigning a case to one of three court tracks — small claims, fast track or multi-track — was completely undermining the reforms. In some cases people simply couldn't afford it. In others the £80 was so out of proportion to their small claim, they considered it not worth the risk.

"Members would strongly advise you to reconsider the allocation fee, both in terms of the principle of applying it to very small claims and to the disproportionate amount being charged. They feel it conflicts with your policy... of improving access to justice, particularly for those of modest or moderate means," the council wrote.

The Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) has also logged cases across the country where clients have been forced to abandon claims. Many involved complaints about faulty goods and services, for which those on low incomes cannot afford to pay twice — including a woman who was sold a defective £120 carpet and another who wanted to enforce the return of a £200 rental deposit. In another case the owner of a small business was forced to abandon her attempts to recover six debts — each of less than £200. She would have had to pay out £480 (6 x £80) plus £120 (6 x £20 issues fees) in order to recover about £1,000. The CAB wrote: "Not only does this mean people are effectively denied access to justice, but any deterrent effect achieved by the threat of litigation against the provision of poor goods or services, must be severely reduced."

In October council members repeated their concerns to Lord Irvine. He assured them he was giving the issue his "urgent" attention.

MEDIA GIANTS

Byers and sellers

THE big money moves in media are making a mockery of Labour's pretence at "de-politicising" competition regulation.

First trade and industry secretary Steven Byers has bumped two relatively innocuous deals through to the Competition Commission, with the sole aim of pleasing Rupert Murdoch.

French cable company NTL made a bid for Cable & Wireless. This would strengthen cable TV which is in competition with Murdoch's satellite broadcasting. So the bid would hardly threaten competition then — but it would annoy Murdoch.

The Office of Fair Trading (OFT) could see no problem, and OFT director-general John Bridgeman advised against a referral. However, Byers overruled him and the bid became tangled up in an investigation.

Then another French firm, Vivendi, had its audacious bid for 25 percent of BSkyB's shares referred to the Competition Commission. Again, the only real opponent of the bid was Murdoch, who didn't like Vivendi's cheek.

Thus it is that Murdoch, who really does have something approaching a media monopoly, has only been stung by competition legislation once, on the Man Utd bid, but sees the same legislation used for his protection.

The commission was formerly known as the Monopolies and Mergers Commission (MMC). Byers' two recent referrals made observers wonder if that shouldn't have been renamed the Monopolies and Murdoch Commission, especially since Byers' junior, Kim Howells, ostentatiously dined with Tony Ball, BSkyB's chief executive, in the middle of the process.

However, the proposed merger between Lord Hollick's Express empire and Michael Green's Carlton is both a serious threat to Murdoch and a genuine target for anti-monopoly legislation. But Byers will not protect the Digger this time.

While the deal is so large that it is certain to be referred to the Competition Commission, there is also a real chance of the government pushing it through because what counts when it comes to regulation is political influence. Murdoch has it — but so does Labour backer Lord Hollick.

Michael Green is of course a Thatcher protégé, but realising this weakness he neatly got Labour Lord Waheed Alli on to Carlton's board by buying up his "Big Breakfast" company.

UNEMPLOYMENT

The bounty hunters

UNNOTICED by the press, Labour has privatised the handling of the unemployed across great swathes of the country.

Employment minister Tessa Jowell recently announced the creation of 11 "employment zones" to begin early next year. Scratching at the jargon reveals that anyone signing on for the job seeker's allowance for more than 12 months in these "zones" gets handed over to a private employment agency, which earns a bounty when claimants sign off.

Responsibility for the unemployed in Haringey, Newham, Liverpool and Sefton goes to Reed. This is in addition to Reed's contract to run the "new deal" in Newham, where the firm demonstrated the power of profit-led solutions by coming up with the country's fourth worst rate (19.6 percent) for getting "new dealers" from welfare to work.

Reed did create one job, however: for Labour's Lord Tom Sawyer who got on the board of Reed Executive. And Reed boss Alec Reed has been known to give the odd £100,000 to the Labour party.

Rival employment agency Manpower did better than Reed, winning the right to harass the unemployed in Plymouth, Southwark, Brent, Brighton, Glasgow and Tower Hamlets. Manpower's bid was "in partnership" with the civil service and so more "third way". Manpower also has a new deal contract in Wales. It has performed slightly better than Reed, but still come eighth out of the 11 Welsh new deal areas for getting people into work.

Manpower has sponsored a whole zone in the dome which gains it big points from the government. When British Airways (whose Bob Ayling sits on the dome's management board) was facing strikes by rebellious stewards in 1997, Manpower had the job of recruiting strike-breakers. Perhaps strikebreaking is one of the "fresh approaches to tackling long term unemployment" Tessa Jowell expects to see in the zones.

A third employment agency, Pertemps, was given a contract to look after the jobless in Birmingham. Last January the Advertising Standards Authority had to force Pertemps to change its brochure in which it claimed to be "the acknowledged market leader in both the temporary and permanent employment sectors... and the largest independent in the country". Pertemps is only the 11th largest employment agency by turnover, and only 5 percent of this is generated by getting people permanent jobs.

TUBE PRIVATISATION

The wrong signal

THE removal of Railtrack from the planned privatisation of London Underground shows that Ken Livingstone's campaign is getting results. But it does not remove the stain of the Paddington crash from John Prescott's proposed public, private partnership (PPP) for the Tube.

Of the consortia bidding for the three contracts, the Tube Lines Group seems bound to win, made up as it is of Bechtel, Hyder, Jarvis and Amey.

The first three are "new" Labour favourites. Gordon Brown and Prescott both love Bechtel, whom they brought in to manage completion of the Jubilee line extension. "New" Labour has lavished honours and posts on Hyder's boss Graham Hawker, and Jarvis has Labour lords on the payroll and sponsors party meetings.

However, Amey does a lot of contract work for Railtrack. And one of its contracts involved looking after signal SN109, the signal central to the Paddington crash which the health and safety executive (HSE) has taken out of service.

FOCUS ON LORD WAKEHAM

With friends like his...

NO figure better illustrates the way Tony Blair has cuddled up to the "forces of conservatism" than Lord Wakeham.

Early indications are that Wakeham's report on reforming the Lords will please Blair by recommending a largely appointed chamber, with the odd lonely elected figure. (Tony's preferred solution is to sweep away an old, unelected, unrepresentative body and replace it with a new unelected, unrepresentative body.)

Before the general election, of course, Wakeham was held up by Labour as an example of all that was wrong with the Tories. Election publicity (specifically the document *Labour and the National Minimum Wage*) singled him out as a fat cat. Labour was incensed by his appointments, pointing out how he had "joined the board of NM Rothschild & Sons six months after he was in cabinet. Since 1981, this company has acted as financial advisers or underwriters in the government's privatisation programme on at least 17 occasions".

Since the election Labour has been much chummier. Wakeham's role as head of the press complaints commission (PCC) has made him an attractive figure; while his seat on the board of Labour-sponsoring energy firm Enron also brings him into the Labour orbit.

Enron, though, has an attitude to free speech which sits very oddly with Wakeham's PCC position. One of the US utilities giant's biggest projects is a power station at Dhabol in Maharashtra state, India. Activities there have led Amnesty International and the American organisation Human Rights Watch to criticise Enron severely.

Villagers at Dhabol found their wells were emptying as Enron's power station sucked up water. Fishermen were worried about pollution. However, local protests were met with repression, as locals were imprisoned or brutalised. By March 1988, more than 3,000 people had been jailed and some beaten simply for demonstrating against the project.

Free speech was the first victim of the crackdown and the authorities also threw in jail a high profile critic of the project, Sadanand Pawar, an economics professor from Bombay, because he had "spread false information to the public which is against Enron".

Enron was the beneficiary of the crackdown. Amnesty and Human Rights Watch also argue that it is its sponsor. Enron paid the police who arrested and beat the protesters and continues to pay them to this day, a relationship legal under state law. Enron also loaned police a helicopter to survey the demonstrators. Also, on at least four occasions, contractors — security guards — for the company directly threatened, harassed and attacked individuals who opposed the project.

Wakeham's interests in autocratic government and the suppression of free speech go beyond India and Enron. He is also chair of arms manufacturer Vosper Thorneycroft. Vosper specialises in selling everything from warships to armed speedboats to Saudi, Oman and Qatar – not known for their free press or elected chambers.

● MEANWHILE Enron has not just angered Scottish miners (*Eye* 990). Millions of English water consumers are also at the mercy of a company that is over-profitable and over here having apparently bought its way into "new" Labour's good books (*Eye* 960). When Enron bought Wessex Water last year, consumers' pressure group Waterwatch objected that the transfer of the water utility to a US company was not in the public interest. Enron created a subsidiary called Azurix to manage its water interests and has now successfully floated Azurix on the New York stock market.

According to Waterwatch: "The company that was bought from UK shareholders to become a wholly-owned subsidiary is now owned by US shareholders. Local MPs are alarmed that the interests of US shareholders will count for more with the newly-floated company than those of distant customers."

E-COMMERCE

Internet-ine strife

THE debacle of Waterstone's abortive online link-up with Yahoo! (*Eye* 989) could have been avoided if former md Alan "Weasel" Giles had only listened to his IT director Ian Newman.

Shortly after Freeserve was established, Newman suggested that Waterstone's should set up as a free internet service provider — a good idea at a time when Freeserve had no competition. Despite the obvious marketing potential, the Weasel pooh-poohed the idea, as he was then trying to arrange a merger with US e-tailer CD Now, which fell through.

Some months later, however, when flotation was on the agenda, Warburgs pointed out to the Weasel that a bold new internet initiative would beef up the prospectus, so Yahoo! was contacted and a half-cocked version of Newman's original idea was hastily established. Despite protests from Martin Lee and others, Giles steamrollered the £4m scheme through just before being promoted to run the whole HMV Media group, without telling his successor David "Mekon" Kneale — who was understandably livid when he found out.

Unfortunately there were two big problems. First, by the time Waterstone's finally waded in, Freeserve had plenty of competitors, including the Weasel's old paymasters at WH Smug, so hardly anyone signed up for the service. Second, perhaps intimidated by Yahoo! Europe's formidable md Fabiola Arredondo, the diminutive Giles somehow failed to obtain an exclusivity clause in the agreement. As a result, the few Waterstone's subscribers have found themselves just one click away from Yahoo's standard book pages, which are heavy with ads for, er, Amazon.

POLICE 8

Roger and out

IT IS nearly a year since Roger Sylvester, a 30-year-old black man, died after being forcibly restrained outside his home by eight London police officers. Members of his family still do not know exactly how he died.

Nor, if Knacker has his way, will they — not for a very long time, anyway.

After a 10-month investigation by neighbouring Essex police, all the family knows for sure is that a file has been passed to the crown prosecution service (CPS) to consider whether any officers involved in his capture should face criminal charges.

Roger was a 30-year-old administration officer at a drop-in mental health centre — respected and popular with staff and clients. On 11 January he was detained under the mental health act "for his own safety" after being seen to "act strangely" outside his home in Tottenham. Forty-five minutes later he had sustained various injuries and was in a coma from which he never recovered.

Given the previous reluctance of police and CPS to prosecute officers involved in other deaths of black men following the use of controversial restraint techniques, the family is not holding its breath.

The family is acutely aware that the case is at a sensitive stage and the last thing it wants to do is prejudice any potential trial. But it has asked police for a copy of the post-mortem report carried out by Dr David Rouse — a simple request which would enable the family's pathologist to make a more informed study to present to the CPS and, eventually, an inquest.

Post-Macpherson, and in light of new home office guidelines that are supposed to ensure greater disclosure to bereaved families, the family believed the request would pose no problem. But that was to ignore Knacker's ability to obfuscate: the PCA, Essex police and the Met all deny ownership of the report and say they have no authority to disclose it.

Though the PCA supervised the investigation, it says it did not commission the report: Essex did. Essex says it was called in by Sir Paul Condon, so the inquiry and ownership of the report is the Met's. In a letter last month John Yates, staff officer to Sir Paul, says Essex commissioned the report and "so any decision to release the findings would be for them to consider".

"It makes a mockery of all the talk by politicians and police of greater transparency in these cases of deaths in police custody," said Deborah Coles of Inquest, the organisation that has supported the Sylvester family. "It shows they have learned nothing and are paying lip service to public concern about the justice system when it is dealing with its own."

Since the outset there seems to have been an attempt by the Met to demonise Roger. While he was still in a coma on a life-support machine, Scotland Yard issued a press statement saying he had been banging on a neighbour's door behaving in an "aggressive and vociferous" manner. The Yard was later forced to apologise when it emerged that Roger was outside his own house and transcripts of the 999 emergency call did not suggest Roger was acting aggressively or vociferously. Witnesses suggested only that he had been behaving "strangely".

Meanwhile the PCA is still investigating complaints from the family about the conduct of Met officers in the initial stages of the investigation into Roger's death.

Operation... Hard Luck

INSPECTOR Knacker of Greater Manchester police put out a colourful press release last month boasting of the "victorious" conclusion to Operation Hard Tack — a drive to "remove the scourge of illegal drugs" from the city streets.

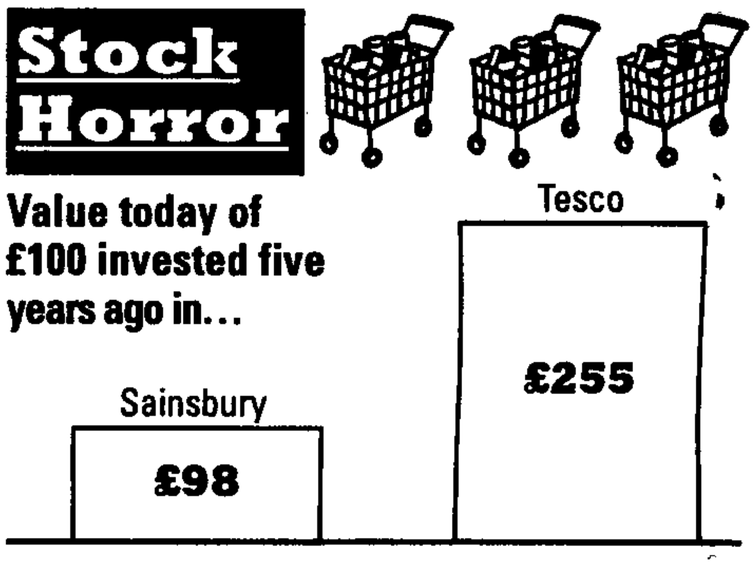
The *Manchester Evening News* and the *South Manchester Reporter* duly reported dawn raids at nine homes in the city by baton-wielding officers decked out in face masks and protective gear. Five people were arrested and cash, drug paraphernalia and mobile phones were said to have been seized.

The newspapers liberally quoted Supt Steve Westcott's purple prose as set out in the press release: "We hope that successful prosecutions of the parasites responsible for inflicting this misery on our community will follow, helping to make the area a safer place to live... We are particularly grateful to those members of the public who had telephoned Crimestoppers with helpful information."

Some of the information was a little too helpful, it would appear. For caught up in the raid were a pair of disabled pensioners, Joyce Quirke and her husband John, who gave a rather different account of Operation Hard Tack to the *News of the World*.

A terrified Joyce, 66, was dragged from her bed and subjected to a humiliating strip-search. Her husband John 65 was detained downstairs. For 90 minutes their protests of innocence were ignored, until finally the officers twigged they had the wrong people and left them "with their front door hanging off".

Which doesn't say much for an operation flagged by Knacker as "the culmination of 12 months' intelligence and surveillance gathering". Mrs Quirke told the *Eye* the issue is now in the hands of lawyers, while Greater Manchester police is conducting a formal investigation.



In the City

LIKE father, like son — and Kevin Maxwell is so much the son of the fat fraudster Cap'n Bob it should be no surprise that his stock market comeback bid is a familiar mixture of hypocritical hype, phoney promises, financial conjuring and offshore obfuscation.

Kevin learned well on the pension pillager's knee.

"At the moment I am not in a position to make a contribution to the pensioners... The object would be that if I am in a position to do something to help the pensioners, I would like to be able to do it," he told the *Sunday Torygraph* (21 November), which had joined the *Sunset Times* — a longstanding booster on the new Maxwell bandwagon. But then *Sunset Times* city editor John Jay was always a faithful friend of Maxwell & Sons.

The vehicle for Britain's one-time biggest bankrupt's new found millions is Telemonde Inc, a US telecommunications venture which is already valued at £160m on the NASDAQ over-the-counter market.

The 450-page Telemonde prospectus gushes with telecom techno-speak and internet e-hyperbole. But the reality would seem to be that the saviour of the hugely loss-making and technically insolvent Telemonde will be lucrative e-porn and its phone sex equivalent.

Why, otherwise, would one of Maxwell's partners be former BT executive Adam Bishop, whose long association with phone porn was detailed in *Eye* 986 following his emergence at the also NASDAQ-listed Symposium Corporation.

And, more significantly, why would Telemonde be offering £100m for Global Communications, run by phone porn pioneer Kevin Swayne? Swayne's companies run porno magazines and chat lines, while also providing e-sex websites for Britain's richest pornographer, Paul Raymond.

Family man Maxwell knows that only the profits from porn +/- not the promise from e-commerce — can repay Telemonde's £80m debt mountain which has already put the company in default and unable even to pay the October rent on its New York offices. But, just like Cap'n Bob, Maxwell jnr is full of confidence that everyone will be repaid. Whether that will be so, if the Swayne deal falls through, is less certain.

Those chosen by Maxwell to preach his message about the "moral burden" he "will bear for the rest of his life", assure Mirror Group and Maxwell Communications pensioners that Kevin's new found wealth is a mere £9m and "paper wealth, not cash". Quite so. Maxwell would be lucky to sell any of his Telemonde shares, even if they were not restricted from immediate sale.

But delving into the Telemonde prospectus produces — what a surprise — a somewhat different picture of the Maxwell finances.

Maxwell and his wife Pandora are shown as having an interest in 3.2m shares, just over 4 percent of Telemonde. But what is not clear is who owns the 29m shares, or 40 percent, held by Intelcom Limited from the opaque haven of the British Virgin Islands.

What relationship, it might be asked, is there between Intelcom Limited and Intelcom Inc in which the Maxwells have an interest? They are entitled to subscribe for shares in Intelcom Limited equivalent to 2,759,000 Telemonde shares included in the 3.2m. But what about the balance?

Telemonde was originally capitalised last year with just $165,000 from Rhone Indemnity Financial Re, an Irish company of undisclosed ownership which, until May this year, was Telemonde's sole shareholder. However, Maxwell, Bishop and two others were the promoters of Telemonde. In September Rhone transferred all its shares in Telemonde to the BVI-based Intelcom Limited. Those behind Rhone agreed that Maxwell and his partners could then acquire a majority of the Telemonde shares "under certain circumstances" — undisclosed. Rhone was to be left with an agreed minority stake. But who are Rhone and what will they take in return for their £100,000 seed money?

Then there is the not-so-little matter of the 4.9m Telemonde shares issued last month for $19m to buy EquiTel Communications in which Maxwell and fellow acquittee, Larry Trachtenberg, were major shareholders. Maxwell declares an interest in only 426,000 Telemonde shares through his one third stake in Telcoworld which was a part-owner of EquiTel.

But if Telemonde survives and EquiTel thrives, then he and the other vendors stand to receive another $50m in Telemonde shares by 2002. How many of these will go into the Maxwell pot, from which he is so keen to help relieve his "moral burden"?

But while Maxwell's shares may be restricted from sale, this does not mean he has to go without. Telemonde is paying him £240,000 a year as chairman to 2002. Prior to that contract, Telemonde was provided with his services through Westbourne Communications, founded by Cap'n Bob's faithful secretary Jean Baddeley. Telemonde has paid Westbourne some £282,000, including £99,000 for Maxwell. Telemonde has been almost as generous with Trachtenberg.

But all that will end unless Telemonde can recover from Maxwell's initial big time mistake of entering into contracts for international cable capacity at fixed prices which are now far above the market rate due to fierce competition. In the nine months to September, Telemonde's revenues all but disappeared, falling by 80 percent to under £4m. Costs meanwhile quadrupled. Losses to date are £24m.

And the situation could become even worse if the Customs decide that Telemonde has to pay VAT on its UK services. This could generate a liability of up to £7m.

But then, thanks to the fat fraudster, Kevin Maxwell knows all about juggling debts and making them disappear.

WHILE Mohamed Fayed ponders whether the libel jury will find his rantings less attractive than Neil Hamilton's greed — possibly not — the phoney pharaoh would seem to be indicating signs of the cash squeeze predicted here because of the worsening finances of his Harrods empire.

A *Daily Mail* report (2 December) that Fayed is seeking to get out from under a £28m contract for an Airbus 319, suggests belts are being tightened. Fayed could face a minimum £5m penalty if he does not take delivery. As private jet buyers usually get help with long term finance from the manufacturers and only put down a substantial part payment to take delivery. This indicates, perhaps, the banks are starting to put the squeeze on his profligate spending — Fulham, *Punch*, properties.

"And do remember... any problems... just come and see me – I like a good laugh as much as the next man"

Fayed's problems are highlighted by the figures from his Knightsbridge money machine for the year to last January which were filed only in October. These show Harrods sales down by £20m, costs up, interest charges up, profits down effectively from £58m to £35m and no dividend to the parent company which received £99m the previous year.

Much of the setback was blamed on the strong pound and this is unlikely to have altered much in the current year. Interest rates too are ticking up. All of which may be starting to concern Fayed's bankers who have provided a £340m loan facility on top of the £127m working capital facility provided by Midland. Last January the Harrods group owed the banks £275m and is committed to "phased reductions" before the loan facility is repayable in 2002.

So, after giving up any dividend payment this year — Fayed and his brothers took £14m in 1998 — and possibly no cheque next year, it seems to be time for the hand that filled so many brown envelopes to stop writing cheques.

THE paranoid Conservative party will be further enraged to discover that the *Times* has hired a firm of Canadian-based private eyes, FIA, to search for dirt — sorry, evidence — on the Tory treasurer Michael Ashcroft to defend his libel action.

This will no doubt fuel the Tories' suspicions about how the *Times* obtained details of Ashcroft's donations through his Belize trust company. But those who know about such things insist that nobody obtains account details by "hacking" into bank computers. That's illegal. It's all done by experts with knowledge of the bank's internal workings and passwords using pretext calls. That way there are no electronic finger prints. No doubt any such activities were nothing to do with FIA.

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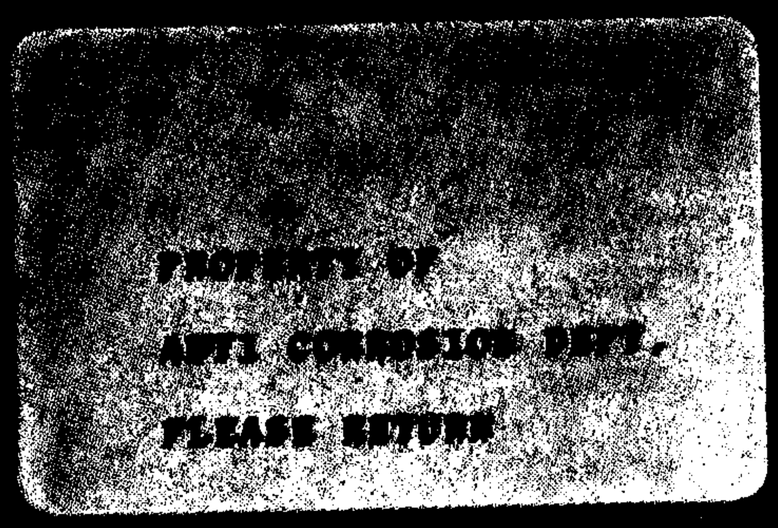

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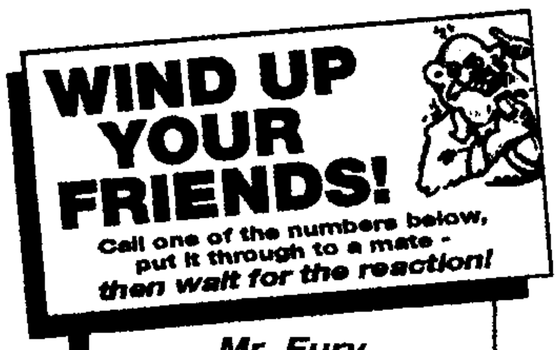
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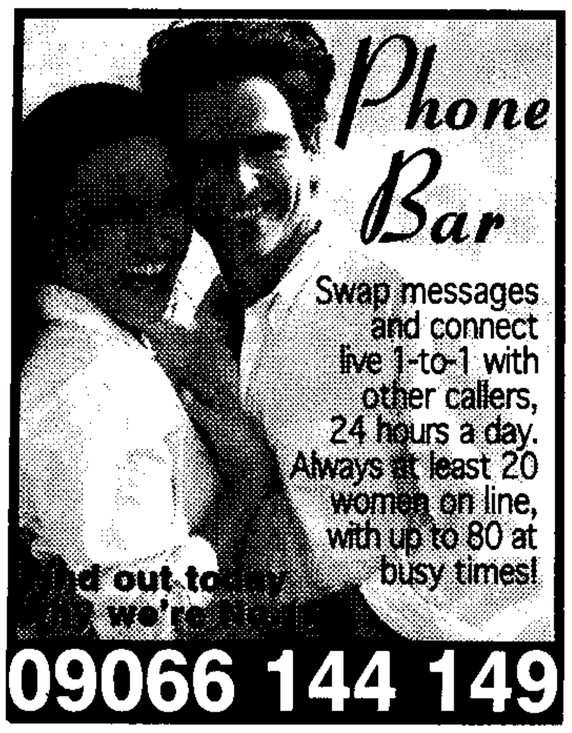
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SPEECHWRITING by Mitch Murray – see page 30...

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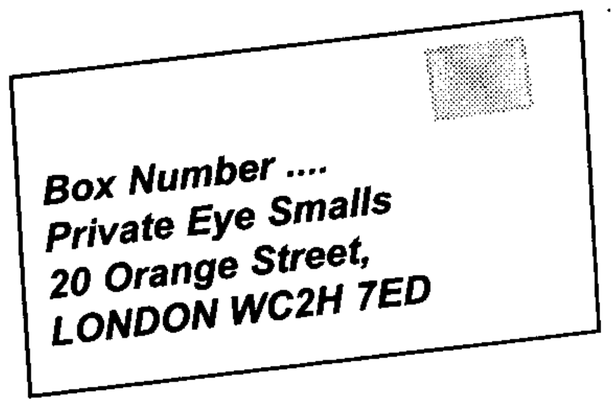

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www.abcdating.co.uk – Anonymous free ads for relationships and contacts.

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DEVINE LEGS seeks party animals. See EYE CHRISTMAS GIFTS for more details...

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BUSINESSWOMAN, French/American, 46, seeks true love. Wishes to develop a sharing and mutually fulfilling relationship and enjoy the finer things of life with a genuine, sincere, cultured, professional gentleman. Box 0590.

NO: Cats, smoking, astrology, tennis, politics, Cilla Black. YES: Dogs, Alan Bennett, football, sex, affability. For male, Merseyside / Cheshire. Box 0191.

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HANDSOME, ASSERTIVE M/explorer, 40, seeking younger, trim, erotically unassertive adventuress. 07050 398943.

ASIAN FEMALE, 37, pretty well spoken looking for well-educated professional tall single man. London./South East. Box 0391.

HANDSOME, TALL, processional male, 40, SOH, seeks attractive female for discreet nocturnal and weekend adventures. Ireland. Box 0491.

EX-SAD BASTARD, 33, seeks 21st C nirvana with Bridget Jones, Mark II, femme fatale. London. Box 0591.

BUBBLY BEAUTIFUL brainy brunette, no ties, sought by late 30's professional male, Photo gets reply! Box 0691.

CHRISTMAS 1999 – something missing? Cracking little stocking filler available. Beat the millennium rush. Box 0791.

ASSERTIVE, beautiful female, 29, seeks unassertive gentleman, age unimportant, for erotic liaison. Box 0891.

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LONDON BACHELOR, 60, tall and affluent, seeks shapely mistress. Box 2091

SLIM, MARRIED MALE, 35, seeks married or singe female for discreet passionate affair. London/Harrow. Box 1891

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STOCKING FILLER? Attached professional male (50s) with lots to give seeks tactile female to cherish. London area. Box 1191.

SENSUALITY MISSING? Me too! Caring, presentable, attached man, early 50s, WLTM imaginative woman, probably attached, for tender pleasures. Suggest rendezvous early in the new millennium. London, Home Counties. Box 1291.

ATTRACTIVE BLONDE, 38, London/Berkshire seeks intelligent, personable man with whom to "seize the day". Box 1391.

MAVERICK DOUBLE-O agent, 28. seeks elegant Bond girl, 21-31ish for top-secret mission. Box 1491.

CARIBBEAN BASED PROFESSIONAL MALE
(tall, white, attractive, late 20's) would like young, intelligent, female to join him as his wife for a couple of weeks.
Flights etc provided.
Photo essential.
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CONTENTED LAID BACK London male, 34, seeks female to spoil it all (surely 'make it better', Ed.) Time wasters welcome. Box 1691.

EDUCATED MALE, fifties, divorced, amiable, flashes of wit and culture, occasionally assertive, WLTM pleasant, intelligent female for affectionate relationship. Photo and phone help. London/Essex. Box 1791.

WITTY, MATURE, west country Raeburn owner seeks well-read, well-covered, warm-hearted woman for pleasures of the mind, table and elsewhere. Vegetarians need not apply. Telephone 01458 250281. Box 1991.

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